



Blinded but Unbeaten

by

H. GILBERT NOBBS

Issued under the authority of

THE REPATRIATION COMMISSION

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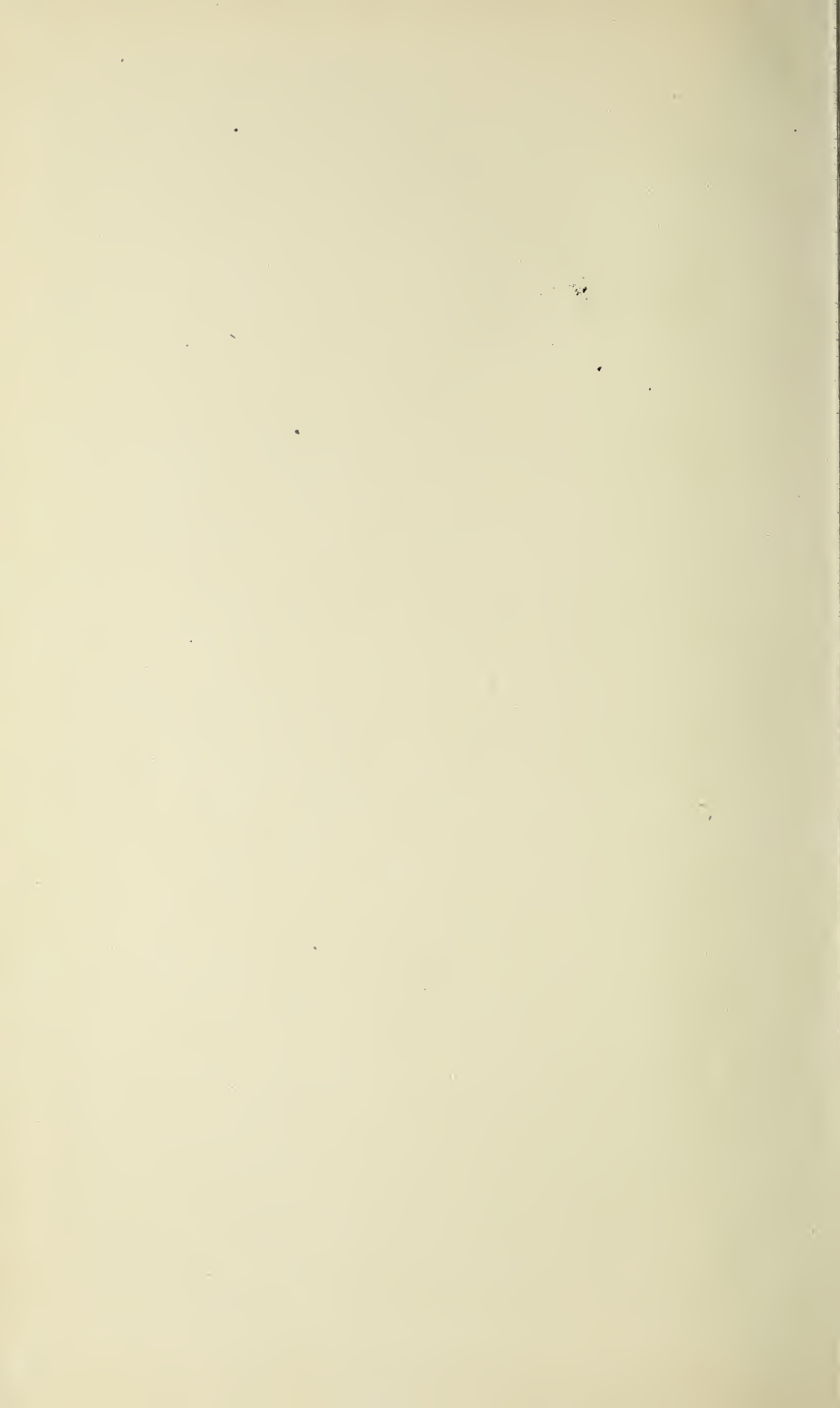
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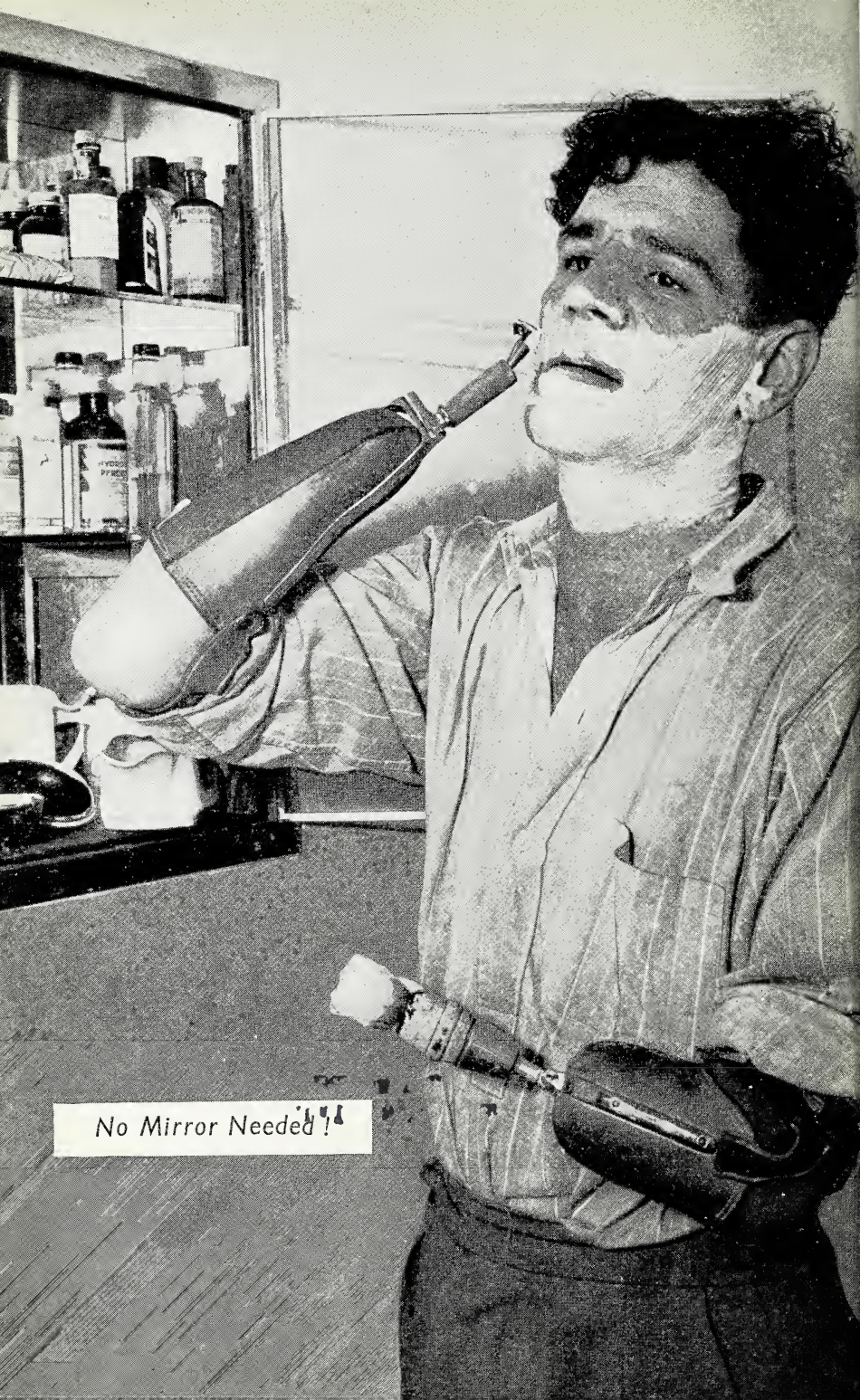
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Blinded but Unbeaten



No Mirror Needed!



Blinded but Unbeaten

**A Record of Incidents connected with
the Welfare, Training and Return to
Active Life of the New South Wales
Blinded Servicemen of the 1939 War.**

by

H. GILBERT NOBBS

**AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND, INC.
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Other books by Captain H. Gilbert Nobbs.

On the Right of the British Line.

Rhymes and Reminiscences.

DEDICATION

The New South Wales Blinded Servicemen of the Second World War, the men who, with calm courage and fighting spirit, blinded but unbeaten, face their future with heads erect and smiling faces—

TO THESE MEN I HUMBLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

REFLECTIONS

Difficulties that seem like mountains to-day may look only like mole hills to-morrow.

It is better to laugh on the top of a hill than to weep at the foot of a well.



The Repatriation Commission is so appreciative of the assistance which Captain Nobbs has given in the re-establishment of the war blinded that it regards it as appropriate that his photograph should be included in this book.

FOREWORD

War damage to the men and women of the Armed Forces takes a wide variety of forms, including blindness which calls for special steps if re-establishment in civilian life is to be wisely effected.

In the early days of the 1939 war, the Repatriation Commission invited some experts to report upon the task of handling blinded members of the Forces, and one result was the creation of a War Blinded Welfare Committee in each State capable of assisting the war blinded under the three main headings of hospitality, training and welfare. These Committees are part of the general pattern of the Commission's administration.

There has been nothing haphazard in the methods which have been applied towards re-establishment. The undertaking has been a continuous one calling for concerted effort with human understanding as the keynote; the men have been of every type, culture and outlook.

In encouraging a handicapped person to take up some activity and live a full life, his education, trade or professional status and his domestic situation are the most important factors, next to his will-to-succeed.

Help has been forthcoming from employers, teachers, housing authorities and others. The men themselves have been generally co-operative, as have their wives and parents, and it is pleasing to me to be in a position to extend congratulations to those men who have responded so well to the training and availed themselves of the other facilities which have been afforded them.

It is considered that the work of these Committees, whose members have given their time and effort without stint in an honorary capacity, could well be a stimulus to people who have the well-being of discharged members of the Forces at heart and who, recognising the service and sacrifice of the men and women of the Forces during war-time, are desirous of assisting them in the reorientation which follows their discharge from the Navy, Army or Air Force.

Captain H. Gilbert Nobbs, himself a war-blinded veteran of the 1914 war, was the chairman and managing director of a large Australasian industrial organisation, but this did not prevent his playing a leading part in the Repatriation activities on behalf of the war blinded. For almost a decade he has been chairman of the Repatriation War Blinded Welfare Committee in New South Wales and, since his retirement from active business life, he has devoted all of his time to his honorary task. The Committee that he organised has among its members men with administrative knowledge and practical experience : these attributes have enabled the Committee to discuss and deal with the problems from many aspects.

To the members of the Committees who have given so much practical assistance to the war blinded, I express my personal thanks, and it is with great pleasure that I record the gratitude of the Repatriation Commission in the matter.

In the following pages Captain Nobbs has given some idea of what has been accomplished in New South Wales in fitting handicapped men into the economic and social life of the community. The story is told in his own style and from his own point of view.

G. F. WOOTTEN,

Chairman, Repatriation Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

I have been asked to write a history of the events of the past years in connection with the training and placement of the blinded servicemen in New South Wales of the 1939 war.

I confess I cannot do it, as I am no historian and statistics bore me and would probably bore the reader. I am not concerned with the preparation of an official report to be filed away in a Government office. If any record is to be made of the New South Wales blinded servicemen of the 1939 war, I must tell the story in my own way and let it go at that. The work of the past nine years has been too full of human interest and inspiration to want to clog the mind with too many dates and statistics. Statistics by comparison with the telling of the human story seem cold and meaningless.

I realise that I must provide a framework for the human side of the story, so my readers must bear with me. If, in the early part of the book, I fail to arouse their imagination, I suggest that they just turn to the photographs showing what the men have done and what they are doing to-day. Then I think they will feel as I do—that they will want to stand up and take their hats off to these men—the men who have shown so much grit and determination and now face the world, happy in the knowledge that they have accomplished something to be proud of, notwithstanding their blindness.

These men were heroes in war and they have proved themselves to be heroes in peace. Hostilities have ceased, but the fighting is not over for these men; their battles will continue for the rest of their lives. They will fight on and be proud of what they are accomplishing, and their example will be an inspiration to all those who have the privilege of knowing them. That is why I can find no better title for this book than "Blinded but Unbeaten"

H. GILBERT NOBBS,

*Chairman, War Blinded Welfare Committee, New South
Wales Branch, Repatriation Commission.*



THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER I

Australia promptly offered to contribute troops on the outbreak of war in 1914 and a scheme of war pensioning was adopted before the close of the year. On 2nd September, 1915, an amending Act was assented to and it was applicable as from 21st December, 1914, which was the date of operation of the preceding Act. In 1916, a further Act was also deemed to commence from 21st December, 1914.

Two years later, on 1st July, 1920, to be precise, a full-time Repatriation Commission was appointed which, under the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act, subject to the control of the Minister, was charged with the general administration of the Act. In addition to the existing functions of the Department, the Commission assumed control of war pensions from the Department of the Treasury.

There have been successive increases in war pensions and, for the purposes of this book, it is sufficient to refer to that payable in respect of blindness.

A discharged member of the Navy, Army or Air Force of the 1939 war (in common with those of the 1914 war) who is regarded as blinded or has no useful sight as a result of his service in the Forces is eligible to receive a war pension for himself, his wife and each child under sixteen years of age. In addition, he may be paid an allowance if an attendant is necessary and it may be spent in any way which the member himself thinks fit.

Parliament decides the rate of the war pension and the allowance and it is laid down in the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act which has been amended from time to time. The war pension and allowance, which are free of income tax, provide the means of living but the income may be supplemented in any manner that he may wish without affecting the amount payable by the Commonwealth.

Child endowment is also available and allowances are granted, subject to certain conditions, under the Commission's Soldiers' Children Education Scheme which assists children to progress towards the completion of trade training or to University graduation.

To assist in establishing a home or to add to the comfort of a home an amount up to £75 may be granted by the Repatriation Commission for the purchase of furniture.

Should the blinded ex-serviceman undertake a course of training, an allowance may be paid.

There are other benefits which are available which need not be listed.

It is not necessary in these pages to give in detail the organisation which has been built up by the Repatriation Commission, in order to provide for all those who come under its care, but it should be said that, notwithstanding the administrative preparations which it was necessary to make in all parts of the Commonwealth for the reception and handling of the discharged members of the Forces, the Repatriation Commission took the precaution in the early days of the 1939 war, of planning especially for the care of those men who might return to their homeland totally blind, or with no useful sight.

In the opinion of the Repatriation Commission, the handling of the war blinded was a problem requiring special study and care and it was considered that it could best be undertaken by those who had the necessary experience and understanding of the subject and who could devote themselves solely to the objective of encouraging and assisting those men to become useful and active citizens once more, notwithstanding their loss of sight and, perhaps, other disabilities.

The Repatriation Commission called a conference in Sydney to which were invited representatives of the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution, the New South Wales Division of the Australian Red Cross Society, the Blinded Soldiers' Association and the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League as well as other citizens whose experience would be helpful, and the subject was discussed from all angles.

Among the matters considered were :—

- (i) Should the war blinded be sent to England for training at St. Dunstan's ?
- (ii) Should a training home be established in one, or possibly two of the principal cities of the Commonwealth and administered on similar lines to St. Dunstan's ?
- (iii) Would some other plan or plans be equally or more effective than (i) and (ii) ?

There were several present at the meeting who had themselves been to St. Dunstan's and were loud in their praises of that institution which had brought hope and happiness to several thousand blinded servicemen from all parts of the Empire. St. Dunstan's was again ready and willing to offer its services to Australia.

At the beginning of the 1914 war there was no definite plan in any part of the Empire for the welfare and training of the men who became blind on active service. No such need had arisen in previous wars, when casualties of this nature were comparatively few; or, at least, no such provision had been made.

The first plan which came into operation was initiated in London by the late Sir Arthur Pearson, Bt., G.B.E., who was himself blind, and who, before his retirement, had gained a wide reputation as a proprietor and publisher of magazines and newspapers in the United Kingdom. He was associated with the National Institute for the Blind in London, but he recognised early in the war that sailors, soldiers and airmen, who, in the hey-day of their youth, were suddenly struck blind in the service of their country might be sensitive about being relegated to an institution which is regarded as a public charity.

A man who suddenly loses his sight does not at first realise what it means, that it is not just a passing phase. When he does realise the full implications, the thought of becoming dependent upon others, on charity, or on pension might give the feeling that life, as he knew it, was ended and there was little hope for him.

It was with this understanding of the soldier's feelings that the late Sir Arthur Pearson, in 1915, decided to organise what has since become known the world over as St. Dunstan's. It was to be for sailors, soldiers and airmen only and was to be run on semi-military lines yet without military control.

With a V.A.D. staff who would look after their social welfare and instructors who would study and understand their capabilities, each man would be inspired and encouraged to continue his normal life and to regard his disability not as a burden, but simply as an obstacle which could be overcome and, with a little readjustment, carry on with a feeling of independence and security.

Thus it was that St. Dunstan's began in Regent's Park, London, and has since grown to such enormous proportions and extended far beyond the seas. Sir Arthur Pearson died a few years later but not before he had made preparations for the work to go on in the event of anything happening to him. He had selected Captain Fraser, afterwards Lieut-Colonel Sir Ian Fraser, M.B.E., M.P., a young man who lost the sight of both eyes in France in the early days of the 1914 war. Sir Ian Fraser succeeded the late Sir Arthur Pearson as the Chairman of St. Dunstan's and, under his able guidance, it continued to grow, for many men who returned from the 1914 war subsequently became blind and sought the assistance of St. Dunstan's.

In addition to the heavy task thus imposed upon him, Sir Ian Fraser has had a brilliant career—a member of the London County Council, Governor of the B.B.C. and four times elected member of Parliament, during which he has fought the battle of the disabled soldiers in the House of Commons and secured for them material advantages.

All men who have passed through St. Dunstan's will ever remember with gratitude and affection the personal interest taken in each one of them by Lady Fraser, who was lovingly known as "Chips." Lady Fraser came from Chipping Norton and that was how she came by the name of "Chips," and "Chips" she will always be called by St. Dunstaners, each one of whom feels and knows that she is his personal friend.

The Australian Army in 1914-18 was engaged in two main theatres of war; the Western Front and the Middle East. Those who lost their sight in France and Flanders were evacuated across the Channel to England and received their training at St. Dunstan's, before being transferred to Australia.

Those who lost their sight anywhere in the Middle East were evacuated direct to Australia and thus did not have the benefit of training at St. Dunstan's. Unfortunately, there was no similar organisation or central authority of this type to look after blinded ex-servicemen in Australia. There was no Repatriation Commission at that time and although the Australian Red Cross Society and civilian blind institutes were willing to assist, there was no concerted plan which was acceptable to the men as a whole and there was a tendency for blinded ex-servicemen to drift into aimless ways.

At the outbreak of the 1939 war, full responsibility had been assumed by the Government, under the Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act. Thus it was that, in the early days of the second World War, a conference was called to determine what steps should be taken for the welfare, training and re-establishment of the blinded, especially in view of the probability that they would all be evacuated direct to Australia.

The generous invitation, so typical of Sir Ian Fraser, to receive all blinded servicemen from Australia for training was very tempting and, at first, seemed to be a simple way of solving the problem. Unlike the first World War however, it seemed probable at that time that the Australian Forces would be mainly engaged in the Middle East and that casualties would, therefore, be evacuated direct to the Commonwealth. That would mean that the men, after discharge from the Forces, would have to be transported to England and after completing their training, return again to Australia.

In view of the serious shipping situation and the physical condition of the men, the idea of sending them to England and facing all the dangers of submarine warfare, seemed quite impracticable and would certainly be resisted, not only by the men themselves, but by their relatives. England was part of the battle area.

To send men over to St. Dunstan's for training would not solve the problem. A local organisation would still be required in each State to meet the men on arrival and visit them in hospital and to commence some form of training when they became convalescent. If upon their discharge they were sent overseas to St. Dunstan's for training, there would still remain the problem of placing the men in occupations for which they had been trained.

It would obviously be useless to train men overseas and then leave them to their own resources upon their return, with a probable tendency to drift, as happened in many cases after the first World War. Reluctantly the offer of St. Dunstan's had to be declined.

It became apparent that the Repatriation Commission would have to make its own arrangements within the Commonwealth. The Commission was quite prepared to consider the establishment of a home or training centre in Melbourne or Sydney or even in each of these two cities, and conduct such homes on the pattern of St. Dunstan's, but if the men returned in ones and twos at long intervals, as might be expected, and the homes and families of these men were distributed throughout the Commonwealth, as would naturally be the case, it became obvious that it would be unwise to establish a central training school or schools until the situation clarified itself. Another factor which had to be considered was the probability of the men objecting to lengthy periods away from their homes which may be far away in the country and no scheme could be a success if there was any tendency to resist the assistance which could be offered to them.

Considering all these problems the general feeling of those who were in the best position to judge was that a local plan should be evolved which should be capable of expansion as the need arose and, in the meantime, a Committee should be formed in each capital city. Such was the plan which was approved by the then Minister for Repatriation and immediately put into effect before any blinded sailor, soldier or airman returned to the Commonwealth from any theatre of war in which Australian servicemen took part.

In Victoria, to avoid confusion with the Blinded Soldiers' Welfare Trust already in existence there, the Committee was entitled "The Victorian Committee for War Blinded," whereas in the other States the "Blinded Soldiers' Welfare Committee" was the title.

Appointments were made to the honorary chairmanship of the respective Committees as under :—

New South Wales	...	Captain H. Gilbert Nobbs.
Victoria		P. J. Lynch, Esq., C.B.E.
Queensland		H. Frazer East, Esq., C.M.G.
South Australia	...	Sir Eric Millhouse, K.C.
Western Australia	...	Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, M.L.C.
Tasmania		Captain F. Marriott, C.M.G., M.H.A.

Through pressure of other duties the chairmen in Western Australia and Tasmania resigned and they were succeeded by Mr. D. Benson and the Hon. Sir Rupert Shoobridge, Kt., M.L.C. respectively. On the death of Sir Eric Millhouse in 1950, the Minister for Repatriation appointed Major K. C. Wilson, LL.B., M.P. to the vacancy.

Looking back through the years, and viewing the results of actions taken by the Committees working in the several States, it is felt that there is every reason to be satisfied with the achievements.

It was evident that a practical approach was made to the problems of each individual and good results followed.

In no State were the problems solved by any individual, there was team work at its best ; even so there was by no means complete re-establishment at first attempt in every case. Far from it; in some instances the pre-placement training was varied and in others, several attempts in placement were necessary. Continued interest and well-directed help by men of wisdom were productive of good results.

Each of these Committees was based on the branch office of the Repatriation Commission in the capital city of the State concerned and not only was the Deputy Commissioner an active participant in the activities of the Committee, but he placed at its disposal the whole of the facilities of his branch.

A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER 2

Thus it was that a solution to the problem was found and plans were prepared for setting up in each capital city a Committee which would embrace those private or public institutions and organisations with the necessary experience and facilities to meet the situation. One of these Committees was formed in New South Wales and it is the operations in this State alone that this book deals with. It became known as the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee, and, in addition to myself as chairman, it consisted of representatives of the Repatriation Commission, the Australian Red Cross Society, the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution, the Returned Servicemen's League, and the Blinded Soldiers' Association. There was more than one representative in some instances, and some of them were specially invited because of their personal knowledge and attributes. An officer of the Army who had served as a Rehabilitation Officer was requested to join the Committee because of the help he had given and could be relied upon to give in the days to come. At a later stage, one of the 1939 war blinded joined the Committee.

It will thus be seen that the Committee in New South Wales, as in other States, comprised not only men of the necessary experience, but for the most part, represented organisations which were willing and able to back up the Committee. Each acted in an honorary capacity in the sole interest of the men.

This Committee, working under the aegis of the Repatriation Commission, was to meet the men on arrival, watch over their welfare, win their confidence, arouse their interest and pave the way for a practical and useful career. It was regarded as necessary to share their difficulties and problems, to study their capabilities and ambitions, to make available to them such training as might seem to suit their inclinations and capabilities and, at the same time, to interest them and provide them with recreational hobbies and eventually re-establish them in civil life.

The men who came under the care of the Committee were those who were granted the special pension for blindness and included those who were regarded as having no useful sight.

Blindness gives one the impression that a man can see nothing whatever, not even light, and that, of course, is total blindness. There are other cases, and they are more numerous, where the visual perception is sufficient to recognise light or to see the outline of an object a few feet away, yet for the eye-sight not to be of any practical use except as an aid to movement.

The New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee held its first meeting on 21st October, 1941, and the responsibilities of the Committee were clearly defined by the Repatriation Commission. It was to take over the responsibility of the welfare, training and rehabilitation of the blinded servicemen, look after their personal interest and comfort and give an account of its stewardship in an annual report to the Commission. It could obtain from the Repatriation Commission, typewriters, tools of trade, furniture allowances, and so forth. In addition it could bring before the Commission any cases for special consideration.

Whatever funds were necessary which could not be provided for under the Act or Regulations, the Committee had power to raise privately or publicly and an account of such funds and expenditures was to be submitted annually to the Repatriation Commission. It was recognised that no Act of Parliament could possibly envisage or provide for every contingency which might arise in meeting a situation and therefore some private fund in the hands of the Committee to be disbursed at its sole discretion was imperative.

The first problem which the Committee had to deal with at its first meeting was how such finances were to be raised. Obviously, the Committee was not empowered to spend public funds, in fact, it had to find its own way of financing any of its activities, except where governmental expenditure was justified in the maintenance of patients under institutional care, provision of training and the facilities for training or the articles necessary for placement. Typewriters, Braille writing machines, recording and dictating machines and such were among these articles. Still a start had to be made, as the Committee could not open a banking account without funds of some kind and it had not even the price of a postage stamp with which to commence its work. The organisations represented on the Committee decided to provide the initial funds and the Australian Red Cross Society, the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution, the Returned Servicemen's League and the Blinded Soldiers' Association each provided £25. With this sum an account was opened with the Commonwealth Savings Bank and the Committee was registered under the Public Charities Act, New South Wales.

No State-wide public appeal has ever been made by the Committee, but many private donations were voluntarily offered and accepted, a sufficient amount to meet all requirements without invoking public assistance. It was recognised from the first that the success of the Committee's efforts would depend upon the personal service which could be rendered to the men by the members of the Committee and that such service

could not be measured in terms of money, even though some funds were necessary to meet exceptional cases and to provide sufficient amenities.

Over the past nine years, the funds held by the Committee averaged no more than a few hundred pounds and were just sufficient to meet the comparatively small amount necessary to supplement the expenditures provided for under the Repatriation Act and Regulations. When such funds became dangerously low a few letters sent to a limited number of firms, or the holding of private dances or concerts were sufficient to replenish the Committee's banking account.

It must be borne in mind that the financial objective was to provide amenities for the men only for the period after their arrival in hospital until they were eventually placed in occupations and were earning money for themselves like any other citizens. The Australian Red Cross Society undertook to provide the Committee with Braille watches and occupational therapy for the men and even financial assistance to meet any emergency which might arise.

The Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution placed its premises and members of its staff at the service of the Committee whenever required and considerable use was made of this very generous offer. At this Institution there is a very large and valuable Braille library and after the men had been trained in the reading of Braille they were invited to draw books from this library and even to have them posted to them in the country. No charge was ever made for these services, either to the Repatriation Commission, the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee, or the men.

At the end of the 1914 war, the New South Wales blinded soldiers of that period formed themselves into an association, which is called the New South Wales Blinded Soldiers' Association, and their experience and advice as well as the personal example of those men was of great assistance. The 1939 war men were invited to join that Association and the blinded soldiers of both wars were thus able to meet together to their mutual benefit and encouragement.

The interest of the Returned Servicemen's League in the work of the Committee was also of great benefit and the Sub-branches of the League welcomed the men into their ranks and made them feel that they were not blinded soldiers but just "old diggers" like any one of them. A blinded soldier appreciates more than anything else to be regarded just as a normal citizen and not looked upon as someone different from anybody else. He does not want to be pampered, fussed over, pitied or ostentatiously helped and is always anxious to show his independence.

The Deputy Commissioner for Repatriation in New South Wales, in remarking on one occasion upon the happy and prosperous appearance of the men, stated that he had never received a single complaint from the men. The reason for that was not far to seek, as the members of his staff were following the example set by the Deputy Commissioner himself, of always taking a personal interest in the men and often referring to them and addressing them by their christian names. They seem to take a great pleasure in being of any personal service to the men apart from their official duties.

It will thus be seen that every facility was made available to the Committee to make the plan a success and it remained for the members of the Committee only to devote their personal service and apply their individual experience to effect the successful re-establishment of all those who came under their care.



Every man his own touch typist. Touch, at the outset, is usually a two-fingered effort.

WHAT IS BRAILLE ?

CHAPTER 3

Braille is a system of embossed dots which enables a person, without sight, to read by touch. If you make a dot and then place another alongside it to make a pair and then put a second and a third pair under the first, you have the whole basis of the system.

These dots are numbered and each dot is known by its particular number. Dots 1 and 4 form the top pair, 2 and 5 the middle pair, and 3 and 6 the lowest pair thus—

1	●	●	4
2	●	●	5
3	●	●	6

The possible combinations of the six dots give 63 simple signs. For teaching purposes, these signs are arranged in seven lines, an eighth group gives additional signs used in forming contractions.

Having mastered Braille, with its interesting contractions and abbreviations, a new way of life is open to the blinded sailor, soldier or airman. He may use his new attainment as a recreation and for serious study.

The Braille system is the most widely used of all touch methods and has been adapted to every major language in the world. It was invented by Louis Braille, a Frenchman who lost his sight at the age of three years. He died in 1852 when forty-three years old.

1st LINE	A ●— —	B but ●— —	C can ●● —	D do ●● —	E every ●— —	F from ●● —	G go ●● —	H have ●● —	I just ●— —	J just ●● —
2nd LINE	K know- ledge ●— —	L like ●— —	M more ●● —	N not ●● —	O — — —	P people ●● —	Q quite ●● —	R rather ●— —	S so ●— —	T that ●● —
3rd LINE	U us ●● —	V very ●● —	X it ●● —	Y you ●● —	Z as ●● —	and ●● —	for ●● —	of ●● —	the ●● —	with ●● —
4th LINE	ch child ●— —	gh — — —	sh shall ●● —	th this ●● —	wh which ●— —	ed — — —	er — — —	ou out ●— —	ow — — —	W will ●● —
5th LINE	ea — — —	be bb ●— —	con cc — — —	dis dd ●● —	en enough — — —	i to ff — — —	() were — — —	his — — —	in — — —	was by — — —
6th LINE	Fraction-line Sign still — — —	ing — — —		Numeral Sign ble — — —	Poetry Sign ar — — —	Apostrophe — — —	Hyphen com — — —	Dash — — —		
7th LINE	Accent Sign — — —		Italic and Decimal-point Sign — — —		Letter Sign — — —		Capital Sign — — —			
	Used in forming Contractions	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —	— — —

PLAIN COMMONSENSE

CHAPTER 4

To understand the psychology of the blinded soldier you must put yourself in his place and look at things from his point of view. Here you have a man who, in the hey-day of his youth and physical fitness, is suddenly struck blind. He does not understand what it means; it has come so suddenly. He is bewildered and confused, he cannot believe it to be true. It is imperative that he is not left to brood but made to feel by action, example and inspiration that things are not going to be so bad after all. He has already seen everything which comes within the vision of the average man and those years of sight must be made use of and he must be made to feel that his past experiences and ambitions can be maintained and developed and that his normal course of life need not be very seriously disturbed.

Experience has taught many things to some of us who have had to deal with a serviceman with loss of sight, and a few of them might well be stated here. For example, do not refer to him as a blind man. It hurts. If you must refer to his disability, use the words "blinded soldier," not "blind man." Do not talk about blindness if you can help it. He wants to forget it. He wants to meet people on the same footing as he did before, and not be treated as though he is any different.

Never refer to his war wound as an affliction. One can be justifiably proud of a war wound: it is a hallmark of a service rendered, but the word "affliction" has a very different meaning. He does not want pity. He hates it. He does not want everything done for him, or to be treated as though he is helpless. He is not helpless. He can do things for himself, will do things for himself just the same as he did before, and that is the spirit which must be encouraged. What you have to do for him, do quietly, and unostentatiously.

All these things are especially necessary if other people are present. If you treat him in the presence of others as though he is helpless, they will do so, and he will be in a humiliating position. He wants to be thought independent. It injures his pride to feel otherwise.

Remember his sight went suddenly. He remembers what everything looks like. He knows how to do things, just the same as you do. Let him do everything the way he used to do it himself. Here and there a little help, of course, but always the way he wants to do it.

As time goes on he will devise certain methods of his own to get the same result. Let him do it. He will get great satisfaction out of these little devices of his own invention. If he pours himself out a drink, the hand with which he holds the glass or cup may have one finger inside, to detect when it is nearly full. Don't let him see that you have noticed it.

Don't stir his tea for him. Pass the sugar to him, and let him put it in himself. When he wants to move out of the room, or change his seat, don't jump up and ask him where he is going. Don't walk in front of him, and start moving chairs. Let him do it all himself. He does not want to be helpless, does not intend to be, and he will never learn anything if you do everything for him. Put the salt and pepper beside his plate, always in the same place, and he will know where to expect it. Do not cut up his food for him. Let him act at table in exactly the same way as he used to, and you will find that he will get along all right.

If he wants anything done for him, he will ask for it. If he gets into any difficulties, help him out quietly and tactfully.

Never take hold of him to lead him about. It makes it very difficult for him. Just give him your arm. When he takes your arm, he receives his guidance by the movement of your body, because you are slightly in front of him. Don't tell him when you come to a step. He is aware of that by the movement of your body. In the early stages it may be necessary to pause at the bottom or top of the step, and then move forward, and he will follow quite easily. Many people make the mistake of saying, "We are coming to a step," forgetting to say whether it is up or down. If you tell him "We are coming to a curb," he will not know when, and may misjudge the distance and make a false step. Just pause imperceptibly and take the curb yourself, and he will conform.

He dislikes to think that he is attracting attention, so be careful that your help is unobtrusive. Describe new places to him, but not in front of anybody else.

Encourage him to take pride in his appearance. If he became careless about his clothes, it might evoke pity and he does not want that.

Trying to do things his own way and trying to solve his own problems, or trying to understand what you are telling him, all becomes a very great strain on him. Do not misjudge him if he becomes irritated, over anxious, or even bad tempered. That is the time to change the subject; it will be less difficult to him later on. Sometimes he may not respond or grasp your

meaning as quickly as you would like. Do not misunderstand him, bear in mind that what you can see and understand at a glance he has got to see and understand by description, sound and touch and the process is much slower. He is fighting against a mental problem, which he cannot explain.

Do not light his cigarette for him, or do anything for him that you would not expect to do for a sighted person, unless he asks or appears to be in difficulties.

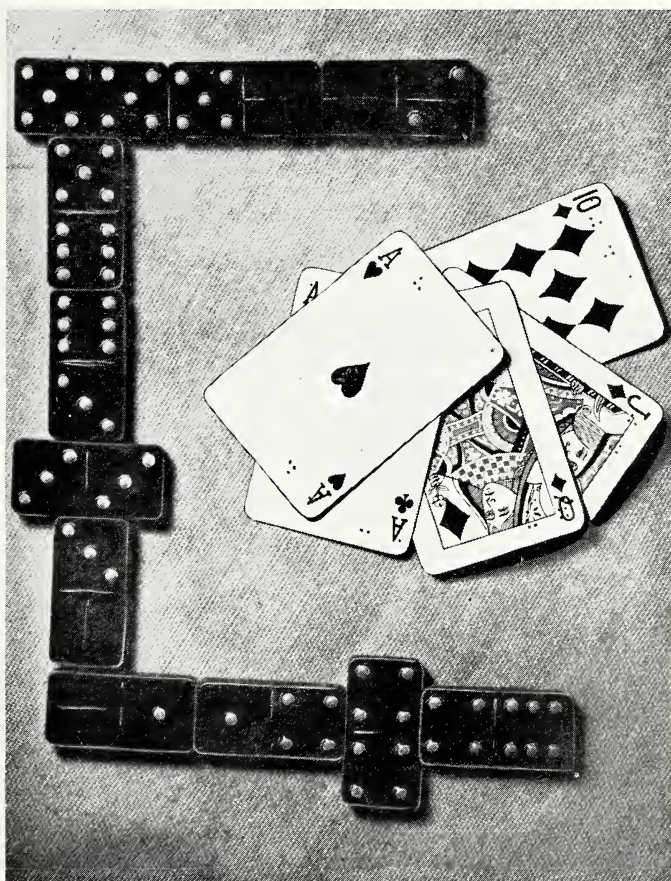
All these things may seem trifling, but they are very important in the early days of a blinded soldier. Later on, you will see the result. You will find him independent, happy and apparently carefree, because he becomes conscious of doing things the same as he did before, and he gets a great kick out of it, more than you can imagine. He becomes ambitious to keep on doing new things for himself, and feels proud of everything he accomplishes, and more and more indifferent to his blindness.

You will be surprised at what he does accomplish and how proud he feels of what he can do. That means life to him. His spirit is beating his disability. He is winning victory over blindness.

Occupation is most important. Try to see that he is never idle. He likes to pick things up and handle them himself. He likes to go to the wireless and turn it on. He likes to move about the house and do things for himself, without taking up other people's time. It is just that feeling of independence which brings him into contact with things, and contact means sight. As he gets to do things for himself and handle things for himself, work out his own problems, meet all kinds of people and talk to them, visit different places, then gradually and imperceptibly he visualises everything to such an extent that he becomes independent of his blindness and gains such a clear mental picture that he finds it difficult to persuade himself that he has never seen them.

He will want to go to theatres, he will want to go fishing, he will want to go swimming, he will want to play cards and dominoes, to use the typewriter, to learn a trade, to run a business, to study a profession, become just as useful a citizen as anyone else, and he will do these things if we just give a little helping hand and have a little patience with him in the early days. We should encourage him to do things for himself and place opportunity in his way, but we should be ready to do anything for him which he finds too difficult to do for himself. He will do things more naturally and comfortably with those who are used to him than with strangers.

In my view, the basis of sight is not the eyes, but the brain. The eyes are the windows through which the brain looks to get its picture. Close those windows and the sight cells of the brain can operate through touch, sound, intuition, assisted by impressions gained through the eyes of other people. All these things bring a picture to the brain which replaces the service of the eyes. It is slower and perhaps imperfect, but as time goes on, the man will visualise so clearly that the brain is satisfied with the picture it gets. That means sight. These visual pictures which mean so much will never come to him effectively unless he does things for himself and his time is fully occupied.



Dominoes with raised spots and cards with Braille dots.

NATURE'S COMPENSATIONS

CHAPTER 5

It must be admitted that the plans arranged by the Repatriation Commission and the implementing of those plans by the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee, are not entirely responsible for the successful re-establishment of the blinded sailors, soldiers and airmen in New South Wales of the 1939 war.

All that can be claimed is that the services rendered to the men were contributing factors to their success. Such services could merely be to teach, guide, and encourage them; in doing so, ambition was created or restored. The Committee endeavoured to lower the hurdles which seemed at first so high and insurmountable to the men and yet not so very difficult to those who had had similar experience, and who had the necessary facilities placed at their disposal.

It was the indomitable courage and perseverance of the men themselves which brought about their successful re-establishment in civil life.

It was because of their own grit and will to win that these men emerged from the darkness to become once again proud and useful citizens, facing life with heads erect and shoulders squared—heroes, every one of them.

By following useful occupations, their world did not shrink. They began to visualise the things they did and the people with whom they came in contact in their working surroundings. In doing this, they emerged from darkness.

Men have packed up their troubles in their old kit bags and are again marching along the high road, making the most of what they can see in the mind's eye, for the mind can see a lot, especially the mind's eye of the blinded soldier who remains active and fights on.

One may talk of Nature's compensations and yes, there are plenty of compensations, but they are not always perceptible. Many trivial things which mean nothing to those with sight become very important to those who cannot see.

When a man is dressing in the morning he may drop his stud. He immediately becomes still and alert, listening for the direction and position where the stud may have dropped, then he stoops down to pick it up. If he finds it immediately it gives him satisfaction. He is not conscious of what he is doing but his

brain has taken the place of his eyes and the result is exactly the same as if he could see. It is a very simple incident, but mentally he has seen that stud and there is the same satisfaction as if he had seen it ; it does not occur to him that he did not actually see the stud fall. This may seem trivial but it indicates how the mind, becoming alert, and the hearing, suddenly acute, do the very thing which sight would do. The sighted man would think nothing about picking up that stud but the blinded man gets a quiet satisfaction out of it.

At some length, a very simple incident has been stated, but there are a hundred other incidents which could be quoted in which the brain is fully employed and intuition, memory, hearing and touch are all unconsciously invoked. Put all these things together and you may call the result a sixth sense. A blinded man is not conscious of it but this sense comes naturally with activity and occupation. He often loses sight of the fact that he has not seen an article, a person or a happening with his own eyes, but the effect on him is the same as if he had done so. But Nature must be assisted; and the only way such a result can be developed is by physical and mental occupation of a kind which arouses interest and avoids monotony. Let us give Nature full credit for developing the power to visualise to a degree that makes one unconscious of the darkness and unafraid of it, and let us call it Nature's compensation.

If we can realise and appreciate that this result is a compensation, then let us be thankful for it and so develop the frame of mind to make the most of what we have and realise how little there really is to moan about.

It has often been remarked how particular blinded soldiers become about their appearance; how well-dressed and well-groomed they appear to be. Their boots are well-polished and their clothes well-brushed.

You may call it pride or conceit or what you like, but the answer is that they are not going to look different from other men or be thought different. In their mind's eye they can see themselves and they want to see themselves just as they were before.

If a blinded man becomes slovenly in his appearance it may attract attention and invoke pity, and that he does not want. The will to win means success and he likes to look the part.

All these things, perhaps regarded as trivial by those who can see, are by no means trivial to a blinded soldier. They help him to see and so are justly called Nature's compensations.

THE FIRST APPROACH

CHAPTER 6

Anyone who has enjoyed the full strength of manhood and a feeling of independence so characteristic of the Australian has a natural resentment against any interference with his normal way of life.

Yet when such a man has been suddenly struck blind and bewilderment and apprehension seize him, he will gladly avail himself of any ray of hope which will enable him to peer into the future with some measure of reassurance.

But to win his confidence you must understand his point of view, and endeavour to divert his attention from the serious side of his position. Formal conversation must be avoided. He must get to know you as a friend, not as an official who is about to instruct him in what he is to do.

When first approaching him at his bedside do not let him think you have taken his blindness as a foregone conclusion. His mind is not yet reconciled to blindness. It must come gradually ; time softens the shock. Try to give him the impression that while he is under treatment for his eyes, you may be able to make things a little easier for him.

Such conversation as the following may develop :—

“ How do you tell what time of the day it is ? ”

“ I just have to ask.”

“ No need to do that. I'll show you how to see the time yourself. Take this watch. It is an ordinary Hunter watch and you will be able to see the time whenever you want to. Just touch the hands with your finger or thumb. The hands are firm and you will see raised dots in place of the numbers; double dots at three, six, nine and twelve, single dots at the other numbers. Now don't look up at the ceiling. When you touch the hands with your finger look at the watch just naturally, it comes easier.”

“ Oh, I've got it ! It's half past four.”

“ Good, keep that watch and you will find it handy whenever you want to see the time, but don't think you are feeling the time. Look at it and think you are seeing it when you touch it. By the way, what do the other fellows in the ward do to fill in time ? ”

“ Oh, some of them play cards.”

“ And what do you do ? ”

“ Just lie here.”

“ Like to have a game with them ? ”

“ Yes, but how can I ? ”

“ That’s easy enough. Ever play dominoes ? ”

“ I used to.”

“Well, here’s a set of dominoes, just ordinary dominoes, you know, only instead of the spots being sunk they are raised. Look at this one.”

“ I get it. That’s a double six.”

“ Good, get some of your cobbles to give you a game. Later on I’ll show you how to play a game of cards, ordinary cards with little dots in the corners. When you look at the card just like anyone else would, run your finger over the dots and you’ll see what it is, and play just like anyone else.”

One thing leads to another. He finds he can do this, he finds he can do that and then he wants to do more. You have gained his confidence. He will follow your guidance, and each little thing he finds he can do for himself diverts his attention from more serious thought. These little things help to pass away the time until he is sufficiently recovered in health to commence training, and by that time he is eager to learn and becomes an apt pupil.



A Braille watch with raised spots and no glass cover.

A MINOR OFFENCE—THE PENALTY AND A HAPPY ENDING

CHAPTER 7

A blinded soldier passes through many phases in the early days of his disability. There may be helplessness, bewilderment, frustration, sleeplessness, and nerve strain. Honest endeavours of friends to entertain him may even tempt him to resist or misunderstand their real intentions. They may entertain him to his discomfort.

One afternoon we received an urgent call from an Army Hospital.

"Come at once," it said, "one of your blinded soldiers is in serious trouble and wants to see you."

When we arrived, he was sitting disconsolately on the side of his bed.

"Hello. What's the matter?"

"Well, I kicked over the traces last night and was placed under military arrest."

"What for?" we asked.

"They said I was drunk and resisted the guard."

"And were you drunk and did you resist the guard?"

"Well, you know how it is. I was fed up with being in hospital and I went out with one or two cobblers and had a drink or two, and when I came back I felt a bit wobbly and, well, here I am, 10 days C.B. and I've never had a red mark against my name all the time I've been in the Army."

We told him not to worry, we would go at once and see the Commanding Officer.

Many will remember those early days of that Army Hospital when the main building plan began to take shape. To the casual observer everything seemed higgledy-piggledy and topsyturvy. One man was apparently calm and undisturbed by the constant arrival and departure of sick and wounded amid the rattle and turmoil occasioned by the building operations outside. Among the thousand and one problems he always appeared to be quite calm and collected. He was the Commanding Officer, who had served with distinction in the first World War.

It was to the Commanding Officer that we wended our way, little expecting to gain an interview on a matter so comparatively trivial. But an interview was immediately granted, and to our surprise, he seemed relieved when he heard of our mission.

"Yes," said he, "this case has worried me, but the charge was entered and there was no other course open to me than to deal with it in accordance with Army requirements."

"There were extenuating circumstances, Colonel. If this man had not been recently blinded by enemy action the amount of liquor he consumed would not have affected him. He cannot take as much, but he does not know it. He is apt to lose his balance more easily and, in his perplexity, resent any interference, and even become aggressive. He develops a feeling of frustration and does not realise that he cannot take care of himself."

"I know, I know," replied the Colonel, "but he was very offensive to the Sister-in-Charge of his ward. He resisted the guard, and although I had to give him 10 days C.B., that really only means that he cannot leave his ward for 10 days."

"Colonel, 10 days C.B. to a soldier who has been blinded would seem as long as 100 days to a man with his sight. It will depress him still further and our job is to make his life brighter."

"I quite understand, but with such a charge against him, and in the interest of hospital discipline, what other course could I adopt?"

"Colonel," we said, "we will give you our solemn promise that it will never occur again. We know this man. We have won his confidence, and we know that he has been taught a lesson and he will not let us down."

The Colonel stood up and held out his hand.

"Good," said he, "that promise lets me out. I accept your assurance that it will not occur again. Now I feel justified in remitting his sentence."

"Thanks, Colonel, but it will still leave an entry on his charge sheet, and he had a clean sheet before. That will worry him."

"Very well, I will expunge the charge from my records and that will give him a clean sheet again, and I am very glad that you have provided me with an excuse to do so. I understand your point of view with regard to this man and I am anxious to be of any assistance to you that I can."

A broad smile came over our faces as we shook hands. We made our departure and returned to the ward.

We found the soldier still sitting disconsolately on his bed, and we sat down beside him.

"All your troubles are over now," we said, "so you can forget that little incident."

"Why, what did the Colonel say?"

"He told us that he knew you quite well. He was sorry that a charge had been brought against you and when we told him that you had promised us that it would never happen again he said that he would destroy all records of the incident, so you are now quite free and there is no mark against your name."

"Oh, that's a relief. I was not worrying about the 10 days C.B., but I had never had a mark against my name all the time I have been in the Army."

"Now that we have given our promise you won't let us down, will you?"

"You bet your life I won't."

"Feel happy now?"

"I do. It's a great weight off my mind."

"Well, there is just one thing more, and we know that you won't mind us telling you, but the Sister in this ward thinks a lot of you and feels terribly hurt at the way you spoke to her. Just take her quietly to one side and tell her that you are sorry and then she, also, will feel happy again, and all will be forgotten. Will you do that?"

"I will."

And he did.

PRELIMINARY TRAINING

CHAPTER 8

Before any occupational training is considered, it is essential that the blinded soldier should learn to read and write; reading because it not only enables him to read books just as easily as the sighted person and brings a wide range of literature within his grasp, but he feels just as independent as anybody else if he can pick up a book and read it whenever he has time to spare.

Usually he likes to commence with typewriting, because the idea of being able to write his own personal letters naturally appeals to him. When he has acquired this knowledge, the Repatriation Commission provides him with a typewriter on permanent loan, which means that he may regard it as his own property so long as he wants to keep it for his own personal use.

Most of the men prefer the portable typewriter which they can carry about wherever they go and they are thus able to communicate with their friends wherever they may happen to be. They readily realise that when a letter is typed it has no personal touch if they type their names, a practice which is discouraged in favour of signing with their usual signatures.

The next in importance is to teach the men to read Braille. This may seem a little more tedious, as a sense of touch must be developed by practice in order to acquire the necessary speed to gain an understanding of what they are reading.

On the staff of the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution is a man who, himself being blind from early youth, has become well known as an instructor to the blind in typewriting and Braille and has achieved outstanding success in most difficult cases. The Institution readily made his services available to the Committee and he has been honorary instructor in Braille and typewriting throughout the entire period of the Committee's activities. With the exception of three or four who were sent to a business college for training in typewriting, he was responsible for the training in Braille and typewriting of all the blinded servicemen in New South Wales of the 1939 war. Through him, the Committee was able to render assistance to many of those men who were partially blinded as well as blinded servicemen who were awaiting transfer to other States and the United Kingdom. His colleagues on the Committee believe that his guidance and devotion to blinded servicemen will long be remembered by them with gratitude and affection.

THE LADIES' TRANSPORT AUXILIARY

CHAPTER 9

The homes of our men were, as may be expected, scattered over a very large area of the suburban districts of Sydney and this necessitated transporting the men backwards and forwards to their training centres, to the various social activities which were arranged for them and to do shopping. Fortunately there was an organisation inaugurated in Sydney during the war to assist the nation in its war effort. This was known as the Voluntary War Transport.

Little has been said of this organisation whose services were widely utilised during the war by the Royal Navy, the Royal Australian Navy, the United States Army and Navy, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Repatriation Commission (for the meeting of overseas brides of Australian servicemen), the R.S.S. & A.I.L.A., the Crown Street Hospital, and the Commonwealth Security Service.

The service was provided by ladies who were willing to drive their own cars and to be available at any time of the day or night when their services might be required. A number of ladies came on duty at 9 o'clock every morning at the central depot and remained on duty each day to meet emergency calls. There were 30 ladies on regular duty with their cars, but this number was expanded when the need arose, to as many as 150.

During the war this Voluntary War Transport covered a total distance of 766,500 miles, surely a magnificent service and worthy of more widespread recognition.

It was this Voluntary War Transport which came to our rescue and gave our men all the transport they needed. In December, 1945, the Voluntary War Transport came to an end; its work, carried out so efficiently and always so willingly, was no longer needed. With a simple ceremony to receive the thanks of the Services, this splendid organisation came to a close, but its work was not finished and will not be finished so long as the blinded soldiers need it.

One of the ladies organised about a dozen others who offered themselves with their cars as a Ladies' Transport Auxiliary to the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee, a service most gratefully accepted.

As far back as December, 1948, they had carried the blinded soldiers over 50,000 miles in their cars, at their own expense and were still carrying on at the time this book was written. They would never accept from the Committee any payment

towards the cost of petrol, tyres or the upkeep of their cars. Their devoted service to the men will never be forgotten. Their advice and assistance in family matters, their companionship, as well as the parties and picnics which they arranged, kept the men in good spirits and the men will always retain happy recollections of the house parties in the homes of some of them where they gathered with their wives and friends. Sometimes over 100 guests were entertained. Such generous hospitality with all its laughter, singing and the many good things to eat and drink will forever remain a bright picture in the minds of the men. Many of these ladies had their own anxieties, for their sons, husbands and brothers were facing the enemy on the land, on the sea and in the air or were suffering in prison camps. For their loved ones they could only wait and hope. Their time, their encouragement and their service they gave to those who had returned to face a future of darkness, a darkness made more bearable by their help.

Ladies of the Transport Auxiliary, the 1939 blinded ex-servicemen of New South Wales stand and salute you !



A job where tension counts.

PRISONERS OF WAR

CHAPTER 10

It is a grievous experience to be a prisoner of war. Certain factors, many of them, make it difficult for one to be content, especially when in the hands of an enemy of the mentality of the Japanese soldiers of the 1939 war.

Cut off from their comrades in arms and from their homes and loved ones, time hung heavily on their hands. As to those who were captives of the Japanese, privation became their lot; their greatest problem was to keep alive.

Malnutrition exacted its toll from many of them and, in not a few, the worst feature was the damage to their eyesight. This was known, when these men arrived in Australia, as Retrobulbar Neuritis, but later as Nutritional Amblyopia. Those doctors who first came into contact with them forecast that, if the eye defect was under six months old, it was likely to improve; those who had it up to twelve months might experience some improvement in their eyesight, but if the condition had lasted more than a year, it was likely to be irreversible or even to retrogress. This prognosis was not wide of the mark except that retrogression has not manifested itself in any marked degree.

Main among the effects of Nutritional Amblyopia was a central scotoma. In effect, the sufferers from the condition had a blind spot which precluded most of them from seeing that which was directly in front of them, but they retained what is termed peripheral vision; they could see that which lay outside a central core of blindness.

Contrary to the expectations of many people, the men who were Japanese prisoners of war had maintained their morale and were not the least bit sorry for themselves. It was learned that during captivity they had imposed a Spartan discipline on themselves and on one another : this was reflected in their demeanour on their return to Australia.

Some appreciation of the privation may be gained by looking at the statistics relating to men of the Australian Navy, Australian Imperial Force and the Royal Australian Air Force, who became prisoners of war in the Far East. A total of 22,176 were reported as prisoners of war, 32 of them escaped and only 14,305 were recovered from captivity. There were 7,829 deaths. Those who died of wounds numbered 275, there were 2204 who were killed, 45 died of injury and a total of 5,305 died of disease.



Pouring a drink—a finger in the glass prevents overflowing.

In the light of these figures it was somewhat surprising to see the promptness with which those who were prisoners of war picked up the threads of civilian life which they had dropped when they entered the Fighting Forces. The degree and nature of any disablement which arose out of their war service sometimes governed the speed with which men were re-established in their course of life.

To most of those men who had been prisoners of war and who had to revise their intentions as wage earners because they could no longer take occupations where sight is needed, the maximum of credit is due : they set out to learn those essential things which could contribute to their wage earning capacity and they did it well.

THE LADY GOWRIE HOME

CHAPTER II

Upon the recovery of the prisoners of war from the Japanese, adequate medical treatment was provided as necessary. Arrangements which were made allowed that the men could be kept under observation for many months and that those men who had returned to their homes in the country could be recalled for further examination and treatment. The Australian Army Medical authorities were reluctant to release men until they were satisfied that everything possible had been done for them.

The Australian Red Cross Society made available to Army authorities the Lady Gowrie Convalescent Home at Gordon, New South Wales, and occupational therapy was available. As it was considered advisable to establish close contact with the men, particularly those who were likely to be in residence for a long period, the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee assisted generally in the work which was undertaken. One objective was that the men should receive such training as became necessary and provision be made for their employment before being given their discharge from the Forces.

It is felt that the men will not forget the kind and sympathetic treatment which they received while under the care of the Medical Officer-in-Charge nor the many pleasant hours spent in acquiring knowledge of weaving and the making of leather belts and other useful articles within the sphere of hobbies.

Through the kindness of the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution an instructor, who had a lady as his assistant, took over the task of teaching Braille and typewriting. His classes were reputed to have the largest number of pupils ever to have been assembled at any one time for the teaching of Braille in Australia.

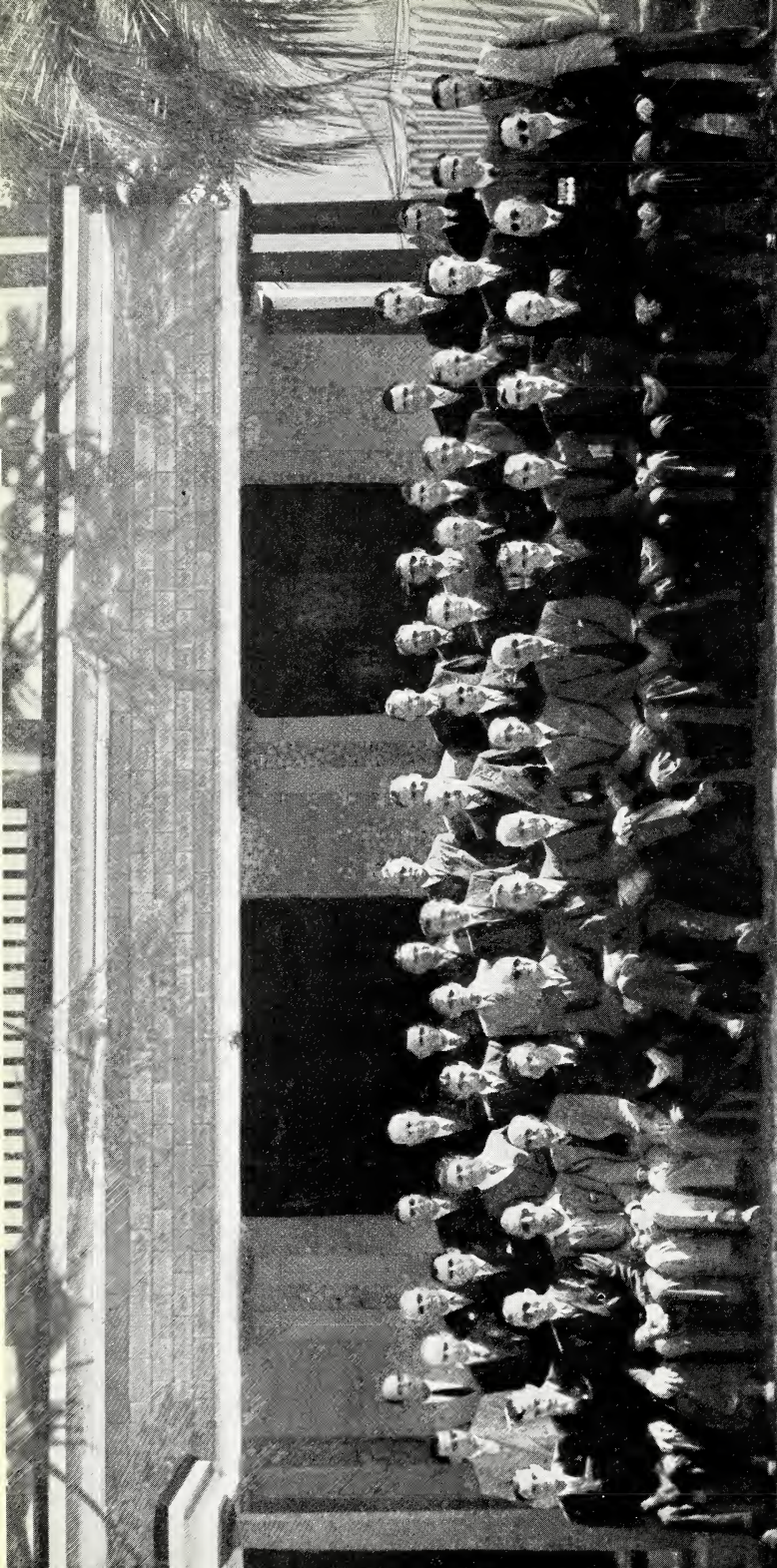
An Army Rehabilitation Officer of Eastern Command, on duty at the Home, dealing mainly with ex-Japanese prisoners of war suffering from defective eyesight prior to their discharge from the Army wrote in this strain, some little time ago :—

“ In every country of the world which has felt the impact of war, rehabilitation has become the unifying purpose of effort both individual and national. In no field has rehabilitation been so publicised as in the re-establishment of the ex-servicemen in civilian life, offering as it does, such scope

for enlightened official policy and unofficial activity. It is to be expected, therefore, that the problem of rehabilitating the war disabled should receive wide interest and attention. It would appear, however, that measures taken for the re-establishment of the blind and near blind are everywhere more clearly defined, progressive and effective than for any other category of disabled persons. This may be due, in part, to the salutary nature of the disability which compels recognition from all humane people and forces those who are excluded from so much of normal sighted living to find strength and purpose in fellowship and united effort. A blinded man, too, inherits a tradition which is kept alive and vivid by those individuals, themselves blinded, who give their energies to the service of the blind everywhere. It is a tradition that does not recognise defeat, that welcomes problems as something new to conquer—a tradition of courage and cheerfulness. In addition, the field of the blinded man provides endless opportunity for endeavour, for experiment, for initiative. This is being written because it is believed that the re-establishment of disabled men, whatever the type of disability, discloses basically similar problems and that experience gained in the rehabilitation of a fairly large group of defective vision cases might profitably be used in dealing with other types of disablement.

“The return to Australia in October and November, 1945, of prisoners of war recovered from Malaya brought many problems, not the least of which was concerned with those suffering from defective vision. Although there existed already in New South Wales machinery for dealing with blinded ex-servicemen, it was not geared to cope with the numbers thrust suddenly upon it. It was clear that the nature of the disability and its effects demanded a new approach. Above all, it was apparent that these men should not be discharged from the Services until adequate measures had been taken to effect their rehabilitation.

“In the majority of cases, hospital treatment was required for other conditions, including the effects of avitaminosis, to which the loss of vision was also attributed. This meant periods of hospitalisation sometimes exceeding 12 months. However, towards the end of December, 1946, about 80 optic atrophy cases were transferred from hospitals to 103 A.C.D. Here a specialist carefully assessed the extent of the disability in each instance. It became apparent that amongst our repatriated prisoners of war was a fairly large body of blinded and near blinded men.



NEW SOUTH WALES WAR BLINDED

The 7th Annual Victory Dinner, Anzac Day, 1949. When the men had grouped themselves, the photographer asked for silence and said, "Now, will you all please look straight at the camera." A roar of laughter went up and someone shouted, "but we can't see the camera." Obviously, they still have their sense of humour.

Captain Nobbs, Honorary Chairman of the Repatriation War Blinded Welfare Committee is 9th from the left in front row. On his right is Mr. R. W. Carswell, Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, N.S.W., Captain L. D. Blessington, Honorary Rehabilitation Officer is on his left, Mr. Roy Kippax, Honorary Instructor in Braille and typewriting is next.

“ A register and case histories of these men were compiled and steps were taken to locate and record others still in hospitals. It was known that some had already been discharged from the Army and efforts were made to contact and record them also.

“ Subsequently in February, 1946, a conference was held by the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, New South Wales, attended by representatives of relevant bodies to determine the policy in regard to those likely to be classed as blinded and on 20th February, 1946, advice was received from the D.D.M.S., Eastern Command (of Army) that :—

- (a) Ex-prisoners of war (Japan) with vision 6/36 or worse both eyes, were to be regarded similarly to blinded soldiers and receive special training.
- (b) Ex-prisoners of war (Japan) with vision better than 6/36 both eyes could be demobilised in the normal way.

“ Patients in category (a) were to be admitted to Lady Gowrie Home, were to receive special and individual training from trained instructors supplied by the Repatriation Commission through its War Blinded Welfare Committee and whilst this training was going on, were to be held in the Army.

“ On 11th March, 1946, a conference was held at the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution to formulate some plan of action with regard to those men who were being retained for special treatment. A committee was created consisting of an Army Specialist, the Army Rehabilitation Officer, the Chairman of the N.S.W. War Blinded Welfare Committee, and a teacher of Braille and typewriting from the Institution. The committee was to remain closely knit and all matters were to be placed before it for discussion or decision. Permission was sought and granted for those men who fell into the category of blinded soldiers, but who had already been discharged, to be re-admitted where necessary to the Lady Gowrie Home as Repatriation patients.

“ The scheme for the defective vision cases which commenced to take shape became known as the ‘Lady Gowrie Scheme,’ named after the Red Cross Home which was made available for the purpose. This home had many points to commend it—it was modern, convenient, set in splendid surroundings and had that atmosphere of relaxation and informality which came as a relief after the restriction

and discipline of an Army hospital. It was felt that in this atmosphere the process of restoration would not have obstacles found in the environment and routines of a hospital ward.

“ Upon admission to the Lady Gowrie Home each man was interviewed by the committee. This interview was made as informal as possible and was designed to provide information as to :—

- (a) The man's general condition.
- (b) The extent of his visual disability.
- (c) His employment situation.
- (d) Whether he had any other problems.
- (e) Whether he desired to learn Braille or typing.

From this interview it was possible to find out which members of the Forces could be made available for early discharge as having no problem requiring retention in the Home. These included those who had their own farms or businesses, or who since repatriation, had discussed their re-instatement with their employers and had been assured of a suitable job. The member could remain at the Home if he wished for the purpose of learning Braille, typing or handcrafts, or he could take his discharge and receive instruction as a civilian in his spare time at home.

“ A small percentage only took their discharge—the majority were in need of considerable assistance. They lacked confidence and were haunted by the fear of the future. Although they had adjusted themselves fairly well, they were aware of the serious limitation imposed by their disability. Most, being prisoners of war, had been out of touch completely with civilian life for some years and that alone brought difficult adjustment problems. This was aggravated by the very profound changes which had taken place in the organisation and ethics of our ordinary life—they were unprepared for shortages, restrictions, rationing and black markets.

“ During the initial interview the reason for his admission to the Home was explained to each member. He was told that he need not leave the Home until his complete rehabilitation had been effected. He was encouraged to enter into the spirit of the scheme by learning Braille, typing, handcrafts and adhering strictly to any medical treatment. This interview was always brief, but friendly and warm—an attempt to let him see that the committee was different from the officialdom to which he had been accustomed.

"Then began the process of 'getting to know' each member. The committee visited the Home at least twice each week. During these visits each member was contacted and an effort made to win his confidence—more to make a friend of him—by informal chats, a discreet interest in his personal affairs and intelligent and constructive planning for the future. Advantage was taken of social occasions and visits to his home to become acquainted with his family and its attitude to his problem.

"While at the Home any social, domestic or general problems were investigated and measures taken for their solution.

"When eventually the most suitable or desirable form of employment or training was decided upon, each member was given at least a fortnight's trial and only after assurances had been received that the member and the employer were mutually satisfied, or that the form of training was suitable, was the member made available for discharge.

"The comments which follow arise from the study of a scheme which worked. They are not original but their importance was constantly emphasised.

"The length of time each member spent at the Home varied from about one to five months. A few spent even longer periods. There is no doubt that the length of time in which the member could be studied, his respect and confidence won and his co-operation obtained was a vital factor in the success of the scheme. It is not possible from the result of a single interview or a hasty appreciation, to arrive at the correct solution to a man's problems. Frustration and failure may result from action taken as a result of an interview in a hospital ward. A human problem can be appreciated in all its complexity and implications only if time is given to its study.

"Confidence is restored according to the rapidity with which the member can be made to believe that he is capable of filling a normal place in a competitive existence. However, no amount of sincerity and fervour alone on the part of the rehabilitation officer can restore his self-confidence. It is not enough to tell him that with training and some conscious adjustments he can lead an independent and self-reliant life. This restoration of confidence and belief in himself, which must be accomplished by the repair of any damaged trust in and respect for other people and for properly constituted authority, may be fairly slow. It is an

unconscious process. As a member loses his apprehension, sees his problems gradually dissolving and he sees that the interest taken in him is not merely a maudlin attempt by the committee to discharge an obligation to him; as the emphasis is always on his ability and not his disabilities, so, gradually and unconsciously the fears arising from his sense of inadequacy diminish.

“Together with the task of winning this trust and restoring his confidence goes that of guiding the member in the planning of his future. While every effort must be made to set him thinking constructively along sound lines about his own future, it usually happens that, initially, decisions must be made for him. If they are wise and logical decisions they can be made to appear as his own. To be wise and logical they must take into account the member's temperament, background, age, inclination, aptitude and medical restrictions. The most important decision is of course what the member will do to earn his living—whether he will seek a job, be trained in a profession of skill, enter a business, or take up a farm. While the question of occupation is generally the most important, it is usually by no means the only problem to be solved. Normally other difficulties exist—sometimes forming that tangled web of confusion and fear that must be unravelled carefully and fully before rehabilitation is complete. These problems may range from a query regarding clothing coupons, through every subtle shade of difficulty and complexity to those of a person who, because of a high degree of mental or physical inadequacy finds the competitive business of living a grotesque nightmare.

“All these problems must be sorted out and the solution found. Such a task may mean using the resources of numerous official and unofficial organisations and seeking the co-operation of private firms. It requires then that a committee or panel, as small as practicable, composed of members with the necessary qualifications, undertake the combined task of analysing the member's problems and then co-ordinating and directing the activities of all relevant bodies towards their solution. In practice it means that the committee with its knowledge of conditions, avenues, resources and so on, makes the necessary decisions and ensures that swift action is taken by departments or bodies concerned.

“It is evident that such a committee or panel must have the required status and immediate access to responsible officers in the various departments.

“ The question of finding a suitable occupation is rarely easy. Jobs cannot usually be created to suit a particular need. On the contrary, the requirements of the particular problem case may have to be adjusted to the job. Thus selection of training or employment as near as possible to the ideal is vital. Needless to say, effective rehabilitation assumes that employment is secure, suitable, convenient, with sympathetic employers and does not savour of charity or place the member in unfair competition with other employees. Success in placement depends on the willing and spontaneous co-operation of employers or employing bodies. This co-operation can best be obtained by personal contact by the rehabilitation officer. It is imperative that every possible means be used to enlist the employer's personal interest and make him feel that he is directly concerned in a piece of practical rehabilitation. Placement must be raised above the level of begging for a job to the status of a problem in which an executive can become interested without loss of prestige.

“ It is perhaps debatable just how far rehabilitation should go, but there can be no question of the need of a follow-up after re-establishment in civil life. This is so widely recognised that no reasons need be given here.

“ The great majority of those cases dealt with were repatriated prisoners of war suffering, in almost every instance, from optic atrophy, a condition resulting from vitamin deficiency whilst prisoners of war. Generally, the defect was manifest in scotomata or blind areas in the field of vision. Usually these areas were disposed in or about the centre of the field, the degree of disability depending on the size and location of the scotomata. In many cases the peripheral field was unimpaired while in some the only apparent damage was a small central scotoma. Visual acuity between blind areas or surrounding them was normal, except where some other condition was present.

“ Thus, while it was possible to give a general idea of the extent of each member's disability by using the normal testing methods, the only way to determine his actual limitation was by practical tests. Where the peripheral field was not greatly impaired he could find his way about with more or less difficulty. However, a blind area in the central field might prevent him from reading destinations on trams or the names of railway stations. He might not be certain of seeing approaching vehicles, or recognising people or small objects except at very close range. Therefore, his ability to move about might largely be a matter of

following crowds, counting railway stations or streets or recognising the outlines of familiar objects. In some cases, of course, loss of vision was so extensive that an attendant was necessary as a guide.

"All members were placed on a high vitamin diet while patients at Lady Gowrie Home and on discharge from there received supplies of vitamin-rich foods from the Repatriation Commission.

"Instruction in Braille was available to all members, but in spite of encouragement by the Committee only about 20 per cent. received instruction while in the Home. This was due to one or more of three main factors :—

- (a) Lack of interest—the member 'was never a great reader and couldn't see the need to learn Braille.'
- (b) The idea that learning Braille carried the 'stigma' of blindness.
- (c) Too much vision. While not enough to read, the member had too much sight to feel the need of Braille, or else could, with the aid of a lens, manage such reading as he desired.

However, after discharge many more sought instruction in Braille and the number is still increasing.

"In a few cases, in addition to extreme loss of vision the member suffered loss of sensitivity in the extremities, such as the finger tips. This was a serious obstacle to the learning of Braille. However, where the acquisition of Braille was vital, perseverance has shown results.

"The great majority were well adjusted to their loss of vision, having learned to make the best of things in the hard school of a prison camp. Also loss of vision in almost every case had occurred early in their captivity and they had come to accept it as an inevitable part of their living.

"As a group, the optic atrophy cases represented a fair cross-section of any unselected group of people. Intelligence seemed to be distributed between high and low, some were responsive types, others were apathetic, some were sound and practical in their approach to their problems, others highly unstable and apparently unable to comprehend the realities of any situation. It is thought that the majority are well satisfied with and suited for, the employment in which they have been placed, whilst a few are considered to be persons that, had there been no war, no loss of sight, would yet have been difficult social types, chronic drifters from job to job, people accustomed to live on their wits and scared by any prospect of an ordered and prescribed existence."

BACK TO WORK

CHAPTER 12

Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to the fact that the blinded soldier does not become the responsibility of the Repatriation Commission until he receives his discharge from the Services and that the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee was organised to carry out the task of re-establishing him in civil life. It was thought desirable to contact each man as quickly as possible after arrival from overseas and to commence his training as early as possible in order to keep his mind occupied, win his confidence, study his capabilities and arouse his ambitions. Much valuable time could have been lost had not the Army permitted the Committee to commence its work before the men were discharged. As a consequence, by close co-operation and harmony with the Army Medical Staff the Committee gained a full knowledge of the men by the time they became the direct responsibility of the Repatriation Commission.

On 30th April, 1950, there were 82 men in New South Wales, made up of three from the Royal Australian Air Force, one from the Hong Kong R.N.V.R. and the balance, 78, from the Australian Military Forces, who were classified as blinded ex-servicemen or as having no useful sight, and therefore were the responsibility of the Committee. Of these men 61 had been trained and were following useful occupations and, in practically every case, in occupations which are normally followed by sighted men; some with a little training and adaptation, were reinstated by their previous employers or were continuing in their previous callings, while others were trained in a new trade. Workshops had been provided at their homes where outside employment was inadvisable. Only three of the men are engaged in part time employment at home, made necessary by age or ill-health and because they prefer the relaxation of their gardens and the growing of flowers and vegetables.

All have the satisfaction of knowing that they are following useful careers according to their own choosing and earning the same remuneration as other men engaged in similar occupations. Their efficiency and contentment are indicated by the fact that many of them, working under award wages, are able to earn bonuses.

Men grow to like the work which they find they can do efficiently and independently. They are patient and concentrate upon what they are doing because they have not the same distractions as other men. They are accomplishing more than they thought possible and that gives them a feeling of pride and self-satisfaction.

On 30th April, 1950, there were 21 men who had not been placed in profitable occupations. Of these there were 9 who were still in training or under consideration and 12 who were medically unfit.

The training and rehabilitation of these men may seem a very trivial task compared with the three or four thousands of men who have been trained at St. Dunstan's in England. Nevertheless, it is no mean task to study each man individually, to prepare him for an occupation suitable to his capabilities and ambitions and to find a solution to every problem that arises.

It was not possible or advisable to send the New South Wales men of the 1939 war to St. Dunstan's because, as previously stated, they were evacuated direct to Australia and to send them halfway round the world for training during the war amid the danger which then existed on the high seas was impracticable.

The training which the men have received in New South Wales was, however, inspired by the methods followed at St. Dunstan's and that institution must be given the credit for having set an example and provided a pattern to be followed.

The following is a list of the occupations in which the men were engaged :—

Farmers, Graziers and Dairymen	...	...	4
Switchboard Operators	...	...	4
Cartage Contractors	...	...	3
Gardeners	...	...	4
Pottery Makers	...	...	2
Venetian Blind Manufacturers	...	...	5
Nurserymen	...	...	2
N.S.W. Railways Clerks	...	...	2
Storemen	...	...	1
Politician	...	...	1
Solicitor...	...	...	1
Soft goods merchant	...	...	1
Florist	...	...	1
Fisherman	...	...	1
Dry Cleaning Depot Proprietor	...	...	1
Carpenter and Joiner	...	...	1
Pump Manufacturer	...	...	1

Hotel Proprietor	...	...	...	...	1
Assistant Air Transport Officer	...	...	...	...	1
Shop Assistant	...	...	...	...	2
Tin Dredging Partner	...	...	...	...	1
Cleaner	...	...	...	...	2
Industrial Employees (various)	...	...	...	...	13
Home Occupations, self employers	...	...	...	...	3
Caretaker	...	...	...	...	1
Hospital Employee	...	...	...	...	1
Showman	...	...	...	...	1

The Postmaster-General's Department readily consented to undertake the training of those wishing to become telephone switchboard operators. When the operator has sufficient vision, he is able to operate any type of switchboard ; but in total blindness the shutter type board is used. Training in Braille writing, Braille reading and typewriting is advisable so that messages received may be recorded in Braille and later typed.

In most large industrial organisations there is some type of work which can be performed by blinded persons, particularly bench work, where movement about the factory is unnecessary. Efficiency can be developed rapidly because of the concentration which the blinded man is able to apply. Suitable tasks include assembly work, testing and cutting wireless tubes and many operations in which hand machines are used. Large industrial organisations have readily found positions for men who have been specially selected for particular employment and they have expressed themselves as perfectly satisfied with the efficiency of the men.

Restraining of tennis racquets is especially suitable for those men who have still a slight degree of sight. It requires sensitivity of touch, manual dexterity and general aptitude, and does not take long to learn. A working bench and a few simple tools to equip them for working at home ; a sign on the front gate and cards in local shop windows where racquets can be left and called for ; a card pinned to the notice board of local tennis clubs and a visit to local sports shops where they do not repair racquets could contribute to a successful business. It is a pleasant occupation for those who do not want to spend time going backwards and forwards to employment and prefer to be their own masters. The objective in this form of training was to encourage the opening of a Sports Store. This objective however, was never reached as the difficulty in obtaining suitable gut and certain trade restrictions hindered progress. Consequently the men who had been trained found it necessary to divert their attention to occupations which provided fewer

obstacles. Several of the men did become efficient and it is definitely a suitable form of training and occupation for a man who has a little guiding sight, providing there are no economic obstacles in the way.

Men may own their own trucks or share the ownership of a truck and canvass for local custom. They cannot, of course, do the driving themselves, but can assist in the loading and unloading and attend to the clerical and administrative work, including typewriting, which is a necessary part of the occupation. Such opportunities present themselves where the men live in a small country town and are well known in the locality.

In printing, a blinded man can be employed in the simple operation of feeding sheets of paper into a machine, stamping, clipping or assembling.

Experience has shown that in teaching men the assembling of parts, some simple sort of process work should at first be selected and, as the man gains confidence and experience, he should be encouraged to apply his knowledge and dexterity to more skilful work.

In professional work where years of study and practice have already been gained, there is no reason why a man who suddenly loses his sight should not be able to continue in practice. His work is entirely of a mental character, he has already the knowledge and experience to apply it and it is only a question of adapting himself to the new circumstances. He may require a dictating set and a small portable typewriter, a knowledge of Braille and perhaps a Braille machine for making notes. One of his office staff can read documents and references to him and the rest he can do for himself by his own mental capacity and experience. The same can be said of men who have previously held high administrative positions in commerce.

Where men have other disabilities additional to blindness, suffer bad health or have reached an age where they are disinclined to take full time work, they can be trained in profitable home occupations where they will not be tied down to any definite hours. They can be trained in the making of small hand towels, rugs and scarves, according to their fancy ; string bags for shopping purposes are popular and in good demand. Leather work, such as watch bands, leather belts and so forth, appeals to others. It is advisable to interest the men in a variety of home crafts as, the more they know, the keener they will become in keeping themselves occupied and the wider will be their market.

The Australian Red Cross Society made available many experienced instructors and full use was made of their co-operation and assistance. The men have happy recollections of the kindly interest taken in them at the Red Cross Handcraft Centre as well as of the handcraft therapy taught them by the Red Cross whilst the men were in hospital at 113 (Concord) Military Hospital and the Lady Gowrie Home.

In the early days of re-establishment this form of training is invaluable and is a mental relaxation which gives the men confidence in their ability to do even more. It is very useful during the transition stage pending the regaining of their health and strength and should therefore only be regarded as a means to an end; for men will not be satisfied with this type of occupation when once they have regained their health and adjusted themselves to the new conditions. Even when men eventually get into full-time employment, such hobbies remain very useful to fill in spare time.

We have described a few of the occupations in which the men are engaged, but the Committee has not restricted the men to any definite plan of training. These men have had many years of sight, during which time they developed physical skill and mental experience. It has attempted to adapt the past experience to the new conditions and to fit the men into a similar type of occupation or encourage them to carry on where they had left off. It has encouraged them to settle down into their normal way of life so that they would not feel that they were any different from other men, which they probably would have done had they been restricted to the kind of occupation usually regarded as suitable for sightless people.

We have devoted a chapter to the Blinded Ex-Servicemen's Club which the men formed themselves. This Club has proved a great advantage, for when they gather together every Saturday for social entertainment, conversation naturally turns to the work they are doing, the places they have visited, or the vegetables they have planted in their gardens; not in any spirit of boasting, but with a natural pride in what they have been able to accomplish, and so conversation becomes easy. Their world is not shrinking; they have been too busy, and, perhaps unconsciously, each one is an inspiration to the other. Their world is much the same as it was before, they are arousing new interests and all the time building up pictures in their minds which unconsciously create mental satisfaction—a mental satisfaction which rises above their blindness so that it does not seem to matter so much. They are not constantly thinking of what they cannot physically see, but are satisfied with what they can mentally see.



Marching On.

Occupation gives them a feeling that they are achieving something worthwhile, that they are still in the race and can hold their own. All these things seem to develop a feeling of pride and achievement. That is why, when you see them all together you find them laughing and talking ; that is why they go about with their heads erect and seemingly with not a care in the world. That is why we say these men have won a victory over blindness. They are fighting men and the fighting spirit which has brought us to nationhood, the spirit of El Alamein, Tobruk and the Kokoda Trail, the spirit that has made the British Commonwealth what it is to-day, is still in those men and they still fight on—unbeaten and unafraid.

HOME-MAKING

CHAPTER 13

The 1939 war caused housing problems, staggering, depressing and sometimes seemingly insurmountable. Thousands of men in the Services married, leaving their brides to reside with their parents. They looked forward to and dreamed of the day when they would return and build a home in which they would start life anew.

They returned from active service to a rude awakening. There was little hope of their finding homes. When men return from war, it is hard enough to settle down again in civilian life ; but it is much harder when the homes which they have yearned to build are still so far away from realisation. It was hard enough for the man who returned fit and well, but the man who was disabled was doubly handicapped ; cramped living quarters, uncongenial surroundings, the difficulty of getting about to search for a home which would provide the basis for domestic happiness added weight to his already heavy burden.

It would be insufficient for us, who comprise the Committee, to tell him that he should make an application for a house under a Government housing scheme and await the result of a ballot.

Perhaps the importance of a home to a blinded man might be emphasised by telling the story in brief of one who was the victim of cruelty and privations while a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

John Williams, late of the Eighth Division Headquarters Staff was sent to work on the building of the Burma-Thailand railway. The shocking conditions under which men worked on this task took their toll and John returned to Sydney in a very weak condition and suffering from loss of sight and other ailments through malnutrition. To John Williams, the N.S.W. Housing Commission made a house available, and now he is a busy man planting flowers and vegetables, studying Braille and typewriting, making string bags and, with the aid of a four-way hand loom, making a variety of table mats, towels and scarves. John Williams was trained as a venetian blind maker and became a partner in the Victory Blind Company.

This prompts us to quote some other men who presented problems. One man, who had served in the two World Wars and returned blinded from the second, could find only two tiny rooms for himself, his wife and two boys. Another who had been trained in re-stringing tennis racquets, had no place



John Williams, his wife and child, in the garden of their home, which is one of those made available by the N.S.W. Housing Commission.

except his bedroom in which to put his work bench ; and a third, who had been a prisoner of war, blinded and suffering from war neurosis, was living with his wife and two little children in one room in a crowded cottage in a congested area.

We recall two others : one man, blinded in the 1914 war and unable to work because of a heart condition, lived in a condemned house ; the fifth, who was subject to bronchitis, lived with his wife and child in a small damp house in an overcrowded area.

What is the use of trying to re-establish these men in civilian life in such circumstances? Domestic happiness is of primary importance. First find the man a home where he can live with his family in comfort, where he can have a cosy arm-chair by the fire on a winter evening, where he can cultivate his garden—for gardening is a recreation which the men have been encouraged to adopt and in which they have succeeded beyond expectation. Give him the kind of home he has dreamed about and then you have the proper setting, the solid foundation on which to build his re-establishment.

Finally, the Committee made an appeal to the Minister for Housing in the New South Wales Government to make an exception in favour of these men by allotting them homes to rent without the delay and uncertainty of submitting to the ballot. In this we were successful. In addition to houses which had been purchased by the Committee for two men suffering severe disabilities as well as blindness, eleven houses were made available by the New South Wales Housing Commission at reasonable rents. Each contained two or three bedrooms, sitting room, kitchen, bathroom, laundry and a verandah, with a large garden, back and front.

The men's happiness in these new surroundings can well be imagined. To the two-war man we said, " Well, Pat, how do you like your new home? " He replied, " When I die, if praise be to God I should go to heaven, sure it could never be better than this." Pat planted row upon row of vegetables and so well did he cultivate his garden that he later found permanent employment as a gardener with a public utility.

We are satisfied that all ex-servicemen in New South Wales who were blinded in the 1939 war and who are married and have children are now comfortably housed and have ample gardens. We breathe a sigh of relief and say to the New South Wales Housing Commission, " Thank you."

RECREATION

CHAPTER 14

“ All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy ” is an old saying but its truth was never more obvious than in the training of the blinded soldier. Hobbies, recreation and any other form of diversion from his training give him something to look forward to and something to talk about both before and after work ; they bring him into contact with people with whom he can laugh and talk ; they chase away the dullness which might otherwise depress him if he is left to his own resources. Strain or monotony during his period of training should be avoided and these are some of the means of doing so.

Even though he will eventually take up a full time occupation there may be leisure hours during his evenings or weekends which need occupying, if only to maintain his interest and refresh his mind. He does not like to give the impression to those with whom he lives that time is weighing heavily upon his hands. These gaps will not occur if he has such recreations available to him as cards, dominoes and Braille books to read. He may like to take up recreations such as weaving and the making of string bags or leather belts to fill in an occasional hour ; and gardening is a relaxation which many of the men enjoy. He should be encouraged to attend such gatherings as the monthly meetings of the local sub-branch of whatever Soldier organisation he belongs to, the reunions which may take place of the unit in which he served, theatres and dances. All these things bring him in close social touch with friends.

The objective should be to give him full time profitable occupation, spare time recreation and an entrance into the social life of the community. Once you can get him started on these activities you will find him very responsive and eager to do more, for he gets a great kick out of every little thing he finds he can do for himself. The degree of interest that he takes in them will be the measure of his success in the banishment of the darkness. His brain develops the power to visualise everything he is doing and the thought of blindness ceases to dominate his life. With this in view, opportunities have been taken to introduce social activities during the period of occupational training. Social evenings have been arranged in private homes, theatre parties and dances have been organised.

During a test match Australia v. England, at the Sydney Cricket Ground, a marquee with luncheon facilities, was provided for the men and their friends and the Australian Broadcasting Commission appointed special commentators to describe the match. Had these men listened to a description of the test match at home, there would have been a complete loss of the atmosphere which was created on this occasion. You cannot visualise clearly what is taking place unless you are actually on the ground, with all the bustle and excitement of being present. Several of the players visited the marquee during the day and talked to the men.

When a popular singer came to Sydney and gave an open-air concert at the Sydney Cricket Ground and seats were eagerly sought by thousands of people, an invitation was extended to the men and their relatives to attend and a block of seats was provided right in front. The final dress rehearsal of a stage show was also the occasion of another party : a reception and tea party at Government House were greatly appreciated.

The Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution made its hall in William Street available for dances. Dancing is a form of recreation which the men seem to enjoy most of all. Besides giving them exercise it helps them to visualise light and colour. They make many new friends and find themselves once again amid scenes familiar to them and they have the satisfaction of knowing that they can still enjoy themselves in the same old way. The movement, colour, music and laughter enable them to visualise a scene and they forget they cannot see, for in their mind's eye they can see it all again.

Each year the men take part in the Anzac Day Parade of which they form the spearhead. They are the first to arrive in the Domain where the service is held. Seated in a reserve next to the platform they can hear by the sound of marching feet and martial music the arrival of thousands of troops. After the service the men and their escorts are entertained to dinner by the members of the Committee and on each occasion the Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation in New South Wales has been specially welcomed as the guest of honour in grateful acknowledgement of the personal interest which he has always shown in the welfare of the blinded soldiers. He once remarked : "To see these boys laughing and talking together and apparently so indifferent to their disabilities is a sight one cannot forget and it is an inspiration to me in my work. It gives me a great opportunity to know each one of them personally and I would ask for nothing more than to be regarded by each man as a personal friend."



Jimmy Jack singing in the Club.

These dinners are arranged for the men to celebrate "Victory Over Blindness." It is a time for reflection and congratulation. The men become aware of how much they have accomplished during the year. They are on their feet again, blindness has lost its terrors, they have stood up to it, fought it and beaten it. One would never believe them to be blind. Their disability sinks into the background and they see with their brain almost as clearly as others see with their eyes. At least, that is the impression they carry away with them, for the mental effect is just the same as if they could see. Their wives, mothers and sweethearts share the same pride, encouragement, hope and confidence as they do, in their future.

To all gatherings and outings such as those we have referred to, motor transport was provided by the Ladies' Voluntary Transport Auxiliary.

GARDENING

CHAPTER 15

Although the main objective is to encourage the blinded serviceman to prepare for some permanent occupation, no opportunity should be lost to interest him in social and physical recreation for his leisure hours.

When the day's work is done, few men are content merely to sit and listen to the radio. A blinded man should be actively encouraged to participate in ordinary social pursuits so that he can join his friends in as many pastimes as possible and so feel that he is one of them and not a handicap to their pleasures.

In other chapters we refer to cricket and dancing. In the home with friends, dominoes and cards can be played quite easily, as the spots on the dominoes are raised, and ordinary playing cards with Braille dots on the corners can be quickly identified.

Considerable attention has been given to interesting the men in the cultivation and planting of their gardens. No recreation is more beneficial to them and a competitive spirit is soon aroused. Many of the men had previously been in the habit of attending to their gardens and knew what they looked like ; while those who were provided with new homes were eager to get busy in laying out gardens for themselves. What to plant, how to plant, when to plant, the size and position of the flower beds, where to make the lawns and which should be the patch for vegetables—all these things required much thought and created interest and anticipation. The mental effect was important, because they soon began to visualise their surroundings and the fact that they could not actually see the garden became less apparent. They maintained their interest in colour thereby decreasing the effect of darkness and assisting the sight cells of the brain to develop a picture of bright surroundings.

One interesting result was that several of the men who had slight guiding sight, decided to take up gardening as a permanent occupation and have done so successfully. Tom Piggott was one of those men ; he had served with the 8th Division and as a result of malnutrition while in the hands of the Japanese, returned to Sydney with no useful vision.

At first he studied typewriting and soon became expert ; then he learned to make string hammocks and string bags. He became very proficient and took special steps to develop a market for his goods. All this however, was only a preliminary



Tom Piggott of the Eighth Division lost his sight through malnutrition while a P.O.W. in the hands of the Japanese. After preliminary handcraft training he started in business as a nurseryman.

Tom Piggott preparing his beds for planting.



to a more permanent and profitable occupation. His interest in gardening solved the problem. He studied books on the subject and, with a little assistance set himself up as a nurseryman. His natural instinct for salesmanship soon made him well known in his district. Today, Tom Piggott is a successful nurseryman and his business ability and enthusiasm in his achievements have provided him with a useful career.

We quoted Tom Piggott as an example of what can be done by arousing interest in gardening ; but he is only one of several who have adopted it as an occupation. This solved the problem of those men who, after years of soldiering, could not settle down to a sedentary occupation and found an outdoor life more to their liking.

Another example is worth mentioning. Sergeant Patrick O'Sullivan served in the two World Wars. In the 1914 war he served in the Imperial Army and, returning unscathed, came to live in Australia. When the 1939 war broke out he could not resist the temptation to join the A.I.F. In that war, however, he was not so fortunate and after the Battle of El Alamein he returned to his wife and two young children, totally blind. Disinclined to study for a new occupation and living with his wife and children in two small rooms, he yearned for a home and large garden where he could cultivate flowers of which he was very fond and grow vegetables for his family. Now he has a home on a piece of land with a 55 feet frontage and excellent soil. Pat says he can grow anything and has plenty to do to keep him busy all day long. "Yes," said Pat, looking lovingly at his garden, "this to me is a little piece of Heaven and I have everything I want." He is now employed as a full time gardener.

By way of an additional and profitable hobby he was trained in weaving and a hand loom has been installed in his home.

Pat is proud of his service in the Imperial Army during the 1914 war and proud too of his service with the A.I.F. in the 1939 war.

He has named his new home "The Blarney Stone." Well, well !

Pat O'Sullivan beside the map of Australia which he laid down in stone in his front garden.



THE BLINDED EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB

CHAPTER 16

Five or six years ago, a deputation of the blinded men of the 1939 war informed the Committee that they had formed themselves into a Club which would be known as the Blinded Ex-Servicemen's Club. They explained that they were doing this because they felt that they were sufficiently re-established in civil life to be able to organise and provide recreations for themselves. This was welcome news to the Committee, which gave the Club its wholehearted support.

Their intention was to manage the Club with their own elected officials under a constitution drawn up by themselves. As soon as building facilities were available they intended building their own premises, but in the meantime the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution made available to them a large hall on the first floor which could be furnished as a club-room and another hall below which could be used for dances. This clubroom, which was approximately 80 feet by 30 feet, was renovated and tastefully furnished. A wide, soft carpet was laid down the centre of the room leading from the kitchen at one end, where the ladies provided meals and refreshments, to a fireplace at the other end. On either side of this carpet were placed small tables, each with four chairs, where games of cards and dominoes could be played. The central carpet allowed free movement without the risk of collision with the tables.

Many articles adorn the clubroom indicative of the skill and workmanship of some of the men. In front of the fireplace is a rug made by Jack Eastman, while on the mantelpiece is a big vase and on the card tables multi-coloured ashtrays, all made by Norman Wilkinson, who is both deaf and blind. Here and there are articles of furniture made by John Seufert, who is blind, with no hands. In addition, John built a large canteen with cupboards and shelves where supplies of cigarettes and other articles are kept for the convenience of members.

On Wednesday evenings and all day Saturdays the club is open to the men and refreshments and meals are served by the ladies' auxiliary. These occasions are looked forward to as they create a warm feeling of comradeship among the men. They arrange dominoes tournaments and issue challenges to the cricket teams of sub-branches of the Returned Servicemen's League and the contests become very keen. New members receive a warm welcome and soon find themselves absorbed into the big family circle.

On 6th May, 1948, his Excellency the Governor of N.S.W., Lieutenant-General Sir John Northcott, K.C.M.G., C.B., M.V.O., officially opened the Club and he has on many occasions since, visited the Club informally. Other distinguished visitors have also honoured the Club with their presence.

When the New South Wales War Blinded Welfare Committee has completed the duties assigned to it by the Repatriation Commission, a task which can be considered completed only when the last blinded soldier of the 1939 war has been successfully re-established in civil life, the Blinded Ex-Servicemen's Club, organised, financed and controlled by the members, will continue to carry on and be a monument to their initiative and courage and provide a centre for comradeship, sport and recreation. The members may, with the exchange of ideas, benefit and gain further inspiration by the recognition of each other's success.



THE CLUB FIREPLACE.

The vase and ashtrays were made by Norman Wilkinson (deaf and blind), the rug by John Eastman, Lieut., R.N., and the occasional tables by John Seufert, M.M., blind and with both hands amputated.

SPORT

CHAPTER 17

Shortly after the formation of the Blinded Ex-servicemen's Club out-door sport was discussed. Many of the men had been keen cricketers and discussed the prospects of being able to actively return to the old game. The difficulties to be encountered in playing cricket without sight were not formidable, but were eagerly discussed and rules were drawn up to meet the circumstances.

It was decided that the ordinary cricket bat and wicket could be used, but the ball should be made of cane with metal bottle stoppers inside, which would rattle with its movement, and a piece of lead to increase the weight ; the size and weight should be approximately the same as those of an ordinary cricket ball. The boundary would be limited to 30 yards and a hit to boundary would count 4. A single wicket was to be used and halfway down the pitch a line was to be drawn, the purpose of which will be disclosed later in the chapter. When playing against a sighted team, batsmen were to retire after making a score of 30, which would help to equalise the teams. In all other respects the usual cricket rules were to be observed. The game, after a few preliminary practices, became very popular and the men were eager to send out challenges. These were readily accepted by sighted teams organised by some of the sub-branches of the Returned Servicemen's League. There are now two teams in the Club and matches are played every Sunday throughout the season.

On holiday week-ends, matches are arranged with country sub-branches of the Returned Servicemen's League and the teams entrain for such towns as Cootamundra, Parkes, Orange and Katoomba, and the townspeople turn out to watch the unique spectacle. Great hospitality is shown by the townspeople as well as by the sub-branch; civic receptions, house parties and a ball are some of the social activities which make these country visits something to look forward to and discuss for weeks before and after. Every season in Sydney, test matches are held between a team of blinded ex-servicemen and a team of blind civilians. Five matches are held and a challenge cup has been donated by one of the blinded soldiers for the



Some members of the Blinded Soldiers' Bowling Club. Note the whistle in the hand of the sighted skipper. Various calls on the whistle guide the blinded bowler.



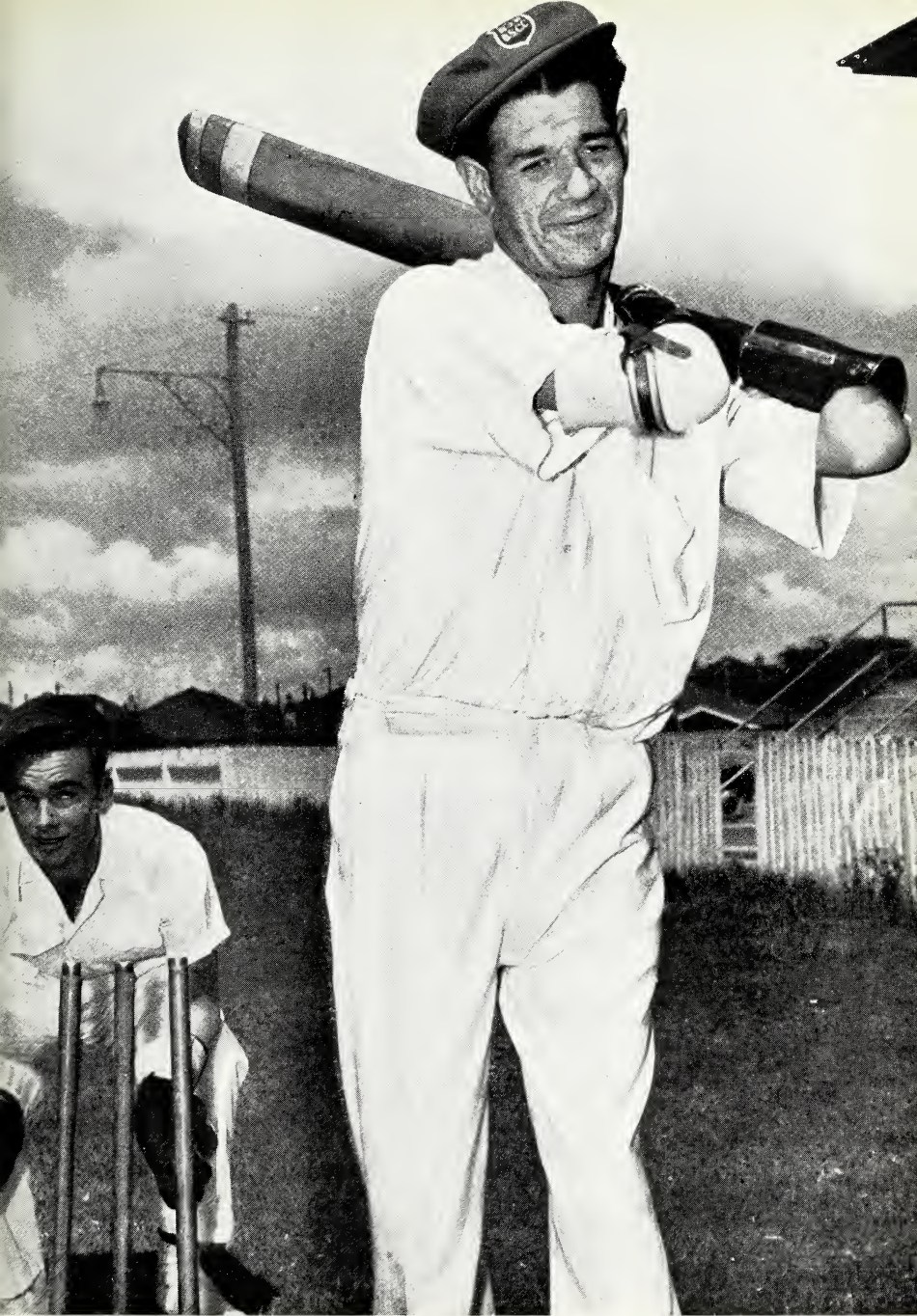
The N.S.W. Blinded Ex-Servicemens' Cricket Team.

team winning three matches out of five. These matches are the most interesting of all, for all players on both sides are blind or have no useful sight. Both the bowler and the wicket-keeper are provided with hand bells. When all is ready the batsman, the bowler and the fielders become alert to hear the rattle of the ball. The wicket-keeper rings his bell to indicate to the bowler the position of the wicket. The bowler then calls "right" and pitches the ball underarm. It must strike the ground before it reaches the line which is drawn halfway down the pitch, so that it can roll the rest of the way. This gives the batsman sufficient opportunity to hear the ball come rattling towards him. Whack! He makes a hit and every fieldman is alert to get the direction in which the ball is travelling, while the batsman makes his run. At the same time the bell is rung to indicate to the fieldsmen the direction in which to throw the ball. When the batsman is completely blind, a sighted person may make the run for him. Like all teams of cricketers there are men who are especially good at wicket-keeping, while others excel at bowling or batting, and each man is utilised according to his ability.

Cricket is generally recognised as a game for young men, but amongst the blinded ex-servicemen of the 1939 war there are several who had served in two World Wars and could no longer be regarded as young men. Comradeship levels all ages and these men take part in the game as keenly as the younger men and probably feel just as young when they are all together enjoying the same sport. At first they were content to look on, but very soon they joined up with the teams and seemed to do just as well as the younger men.

One player, for example, had already served 37 years in the Royal Navy and Hong Kong R.N.V.R. and returned to live in Sydney after suffering loss of sight while in the hands of the Japanese. At first cricket seemed beyond him because, in addition to his loss of sight, some spinal trouble had affected the use of a leg and he could move only with difficulty with the aid of a stick. He watched the game and said to himself, "Well, if they can play cricket, so can I." Today he is one of the team and takes part in all the matches. He is not able to field, bowl or act as wicket-keeper, but he can use the bat while another member of the team makes his runs for him. He scores well, takes part in most of the matches and eagerly looks forward to the country tours. What does age matter, what do disabilities matter, if a man has the spirit to master both?

Without sight, with one ear-drum broken and both hands amputated, a man attended every match and yearned to play himself. He made up his mind that he was not going to be left



John Seufert, M.M., playing cricket with Ronnie Cardin as wicket keeper.

out of the game—and he was not, for very soon he became one of the best batsmen in the team and a good bowler. Gadgets were made for him by the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory which fitted firmly on the stumps of his arms and he made an attachment to the lower part of the handle of the bat which he strapped firmly to the gadget on his right arm. For the left arm he made a steel cap which fitted over the top of the handle. These attachments enabled him to take up his position at the crease with a complete command over his bat. He looked as nonchalant as a seasoned cricketer. After two or three practice games he became the Don Bradman of the team and often carried his bat to top score. When his side is fielding he screws a wire scoop into the gadget on his right arm and, with the assistance of the stump of his left arm, scoops the ball up and throws it to the wicket-keeper or the bowler with the same accuracy as any of the other fielders. When he bowls he places the ball in the wire scoop and, judging the position of the wicket by the sound of the bell, bowls the ball underhand towards the wicket, so as to strike the ground before it reaches the line halfway down the pitch. He has developed sufficient skill to be selected as a bowler in the team. He seems to think there is nothing extraordinary about all this—but what a man!

Early in 1949, several of the men began to practise the game of bowls, led by one who had previous experience. They mastered the game so quickly under the guidance of an experienced player of a well-known bowling club that they received invitations to play on the greens of metropolitan and country clubs against sighted players. The skill which they displayed attracted much attention.

This was the beginning of a new sport for the men and other members of the Club became interested. On 31st August, 1949, at a meeting held in the clubroom a Blinded Soldiers' Bowling Club was formed within the framework of the Blinded Ex-Servicemen's Club. Officials were appointed and invitations accepted for a series of games on metropolitan greens and visits to country centres.

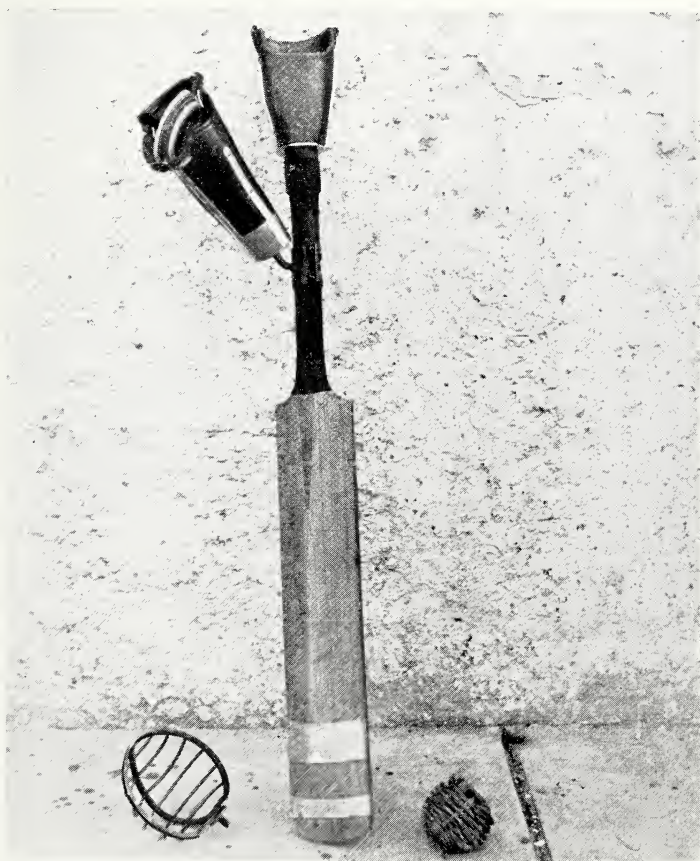
The game is played in accordance with Association rules, the only difference being that the skip or leader is a sighted man. He indicates where he wishes the ball to rest by the use of a whistle and the men judge by sound where they are to place the bowl.

During one of the matches a prominent member of a country club expressed his opinion that although the men had been playing only a few months they were equal to an average player with his sight who had been practising for twelve months.

The Blinded Soldiers' Bowling Club does not own its own green as there are not sufficient players to make this practicable. However facilities were generously made available by many clubs with whom matches were arranged. This gave the added advantage of contact with other bowlers, as well as the change of environment which such visits afforded.

The men look forward to their week-ends which provide them with so much enjoyment and outdoor sport in both cricket and bowls.

Cricket is a seasonal game, but bowls provides recreation throughout the year.



John Seufert's bat, showing attachments, also wire scoop which he fixes to his arm for fielding and bowling. On the right is also shown the wicker ball containing rattle, used by the team.

NORMAN WILKINSON

CHAPTER 18

At the outbreak of the 1939 war, Norman Wilkinson answered his country's call and joined the 2/1st Battalion. He served in the Middle East and in the New Guinea theatre of operations. He fought over the Kokoda Trail and was then stricken with scrub typhus. At the age of 19 he was back in Sydney, stone deaf and blind.

We received an urgent call from Army officers one day to come to 113 (Concord) Military Hospital where a young soldier had just arrived. There we found him, sitting quietly in the hospital ward, with nothing to do but sit. He did not know what hospital he was in or in what city. He was not dumb, but being unable to hear himself speak he spoke in jerks as though with an effort, so that it was difficult to understand what he said.

Nobody could communicate with him for he could neither hear what was said to him nor read what was written. When he became aware of your presence he would smile and make some commonplace remark ; but what could he say, if he did not know you and what you were talking about. However he had a ready smile and he recognised your presence by just smiling. It was uncanny and a feeling of awe spread throughout the ward.

Our honorary instructor was sent for and patiently set to work to teach him hand signs. First the letter "A" was traced with the finger on the palm of his hand and then he was shown the sign of the letter "A" in the deaf and dumb language. Other letters followed until he recognised the hand sign of every letter in the alphabet. Then patiently and laboriously words were built up until he could slowly recognise them and gradually it became possible to hold a conversation, using at first a few simple phrases.

The sisters and some of the soldiers in the ward looked on and they too learned the signs, as they wanted to help him and talk to him. He practised hard, no longer with that set smile on his face which seemed so unreal, but a brighter smile, an animation. Patiently a sister or a soldier would sit by his side and hold a slow conversation on his hands, but with his spoken reply. In time he showed improved articulation.

But this slow "conversation" could not go on all day and every day. There must be some diversion. Every soldier in the ward was anxious to do something for him, to make him feel that he was one of them and they were his cobbers, but his disabilities were like an iron curtain which shut him away from the rest of the world.

We took him a box of dominoes; just ordinary dominoes, except that the spots were raised. We let him feel them. He recognised them and we saw at once that here was something which he knew he could use. Can the reader understand what hope and joy can come into a man's life by such a trivial thing as a box of dominoes? Imagine a man drifting alone in mid-ocean and suddenly spotting an aeroplane in the sky! It may see him, it may not, but it is a ray of hope however remote; so there is sudden joy in his heart. So it was with Norman Wilkinson, and his cobbers in the ward were equally joyful. To understand what the comradeship of soldiers means, you have to see them in hospital wards, each one quietly attentive and helpful to those less fortunate than himself, forgetting his own disabilities and quietly doing a job for a cobber who needs help.

They gave up their game of cards, for here was a game that they could play with Norman. Norman could be one of them!

The iron curtain was rising and no longer would he sit alone, doing nothing. No, not while they could give a hand.

In a hospital ward men are found with hearts of gold.

Apart from his permanent disabilities, his health was reasonably good and early training became essential in order to build up his morale and keep his mind occupied. In such distressing circumstances the mind becomes extremely active and if he were left to his own thoughts, frustration might give him a feeling of desperation.

His world has shrunk rapidly. The life that he used to know seems far away. Give him something that he can do, something that he can learn; then every little thing he can accomplish, no matter how trivial, makes his world expand. His mind then no longer dwells on morbid things. To triumph over his handicap becomes his supreme ambition.

Braille reading, the instruction being given in the deaf and dumb language, was next undertaken and once the Braille alphabet was mastered he progressed with remarkable rapidity. We know that blindness induces concentration, but blindness and deafness intensify the powers of concentration and help the pupil. What compensation has Nature for both deafness and blindness? Well, watch Norman Wilkinson and you will agree that he is acquiring knowledge far more quickly than if he had sight and hearing. Nature's compensation for disabilities is built up of seemingly little things, but the combination of these little things is decidedly a compensation. Recognise and accept that



Process requiring the use of a pottery lathe.



Throwing on the pottery wheel.



Weighing up materials. Half-pennies, pennies and silver pieces are used as weights.

as a fact and you will understand that no matter what are your ailments or disabilities, you have still something left to be thankful for, something to live for.

Norman Wilkinson acquired the knowledge of Braille reading so quickly that he was soon borrowing books from the Braille library. One morning he awoke early, long before others were astir, and reached out for his Braille book. When asked why he was reading Braille at such an unearthly hour in the morning—of course the question was asked on his hands—he replied, “Well, this is a detective story and when I woke up this morning I remembered that I must have fallen asleep last night just when I had reached a very exciting part.”

It was then that we knew that he had arrived at a point in his training in Braille where study was no longer a task, but a pleasure. He was now interested in what he was reading and a world of literature was open to him. Next he was taught the keyboard of the typewriter and, to assist him, Braille dots were fixed on the keyboard to represent the letters. He was given a typewriter on a Friday and on the following Monday he wrote a three page letter with remarkably few errors, and what a lot he had to tell us!

We could write to him in Braille and he could reply on the typewriter. This was quicker than conversing by hand signs; he could express himself naturally, convey his thoughts and ambitions to us.

There was no longer a curtain between him and the rest of the world. He could write to his friends as freely as anyone else and they could write to him or, if they could not write Braille, they could take their letters along to the Royal Sydney Industrial Blind Institution and have them put into Braille.

One day a concert party arrived to entertain the men at 113 (Concord) Military Hospital. Norman Wilkinson was there, for although he could neither hear nor see what was going on, he liked to be present at such gatherings and was glad of any information which could be conveyed to him on his hands, and furthermore, there was a mental satisfaction in being present. There was a young lady in the party, Miss Patricia Carder, who noticed that hand signs were being used and, having a knowledge of them herself, she went over to sit by his side and introduced herself on his hands.

That was the beginning of a romance which ended very happily. Perhaps we should not use the word “ended” because the romance was by no means terminated when later they

married. They both are patient people and she, a talented woman, is proud of his accomplishments. Search the world over, you would not find a couple more suited to each other or more engrossed in each other's lives than they.

We knew that they had become engaged, but it came as a surprise to us one morning in October, 1943, when a telephone call informed us that Norman Wilkinson and Patricia Carder were to be married that afternoon at 3 o'clock.

Our Ladies' Transport Auxiliary quickly arranged for cars and all the members of the Committee and their wives assembled at the church and our honorary instructor stood by the side of the bridegroom, communicating the marriage ceremony to him—surely an unusual and an impressive sight. Was this a sacrifice the girl was making? Was it a sympathy marriage? Was it wise for any girl to link herself for life with a young man, just 20, who was both deaf and blind?

No, dismiss those thoughts from your mind. Here was a real love romance. Here was a girl who would devote her life to the man she loved. She was talented and had studied at the Sydney Technical College many of the arts in which he could become interested. She had much to give, her life would become full with an ambition to make him richer by the talents she possessed as well as by the recognition of her devotion.

The daily life of a great metropolis rolled on without a thought of what was taking place in that church, but those who witnessed the ceremony prayed earnestly for the happiness which these young people so well deserved. The ceremony over, the congratulations, handshakes, confetti and laughter all seemed a fitting celebration, but the bride and bridegroom and all the guests were taken to an hotel where hasty arrangements had been made by the Committee for a wedding breakfast. And what a great party it was—all arranged in a few hours. The room was beautifully decorated with an abundance of flowers. Waiters moved swiftly about, filling glasses with wine which seemingly bubbled with excitement. Then in came the bride and bridegroom. All rose and cheered them as they entered and took their places behind a wedding cake which had been quickly provided by the Ladies' Auxiliary.

It was obvious that this wedding breakfast came as a great surprise to the happy couple. Speeches were made, a toast to the health of the bride and bridegroom was proposed and drunk amid cheers and the singing of "For they are jolly good fellows."

As they sat quietly side by side while the speeches were being made, the bride, deftly, with her hand touching his, conveyed to him what was being said.



Removing pottery from the kiln after being fired.



CONVERSATION—Norman's son, aged two, can make signs indicating simple words which Norman readily understands.



Final Examination.

Then the bride cut the cake, first telling him with her hands what she was going to do. There was nothing unusual about the proceedings except perhaps that the speakers spoke more slowly than usual to give the bride a better opportunity of translating. To the casual observer it would seem impossible that more than a few odd words here and there could be conveyed by the hands, but the speed that these two had developed by practice was most remarkable. Words do not have to be spelt out in full, the first two or three letters or the first syllable conveys the rest of the word and they have become highly skilled in abbreviations, so that conversations or speeches are speedily understood by him. He just holds his hand by his side with her hand touching his and you do not notice that she is telling him of your approach, so you are surprised when he holds out his hand and calls you by name.

The wedding cake having been cut and distributed, the bride, unseen by those present, informed the bridegroom that it was time for him to reply and he stood up with all the assurance of a man who is master of himself and proud to think he is called upon to make a speech, the words of which he could not hear himself. When he sat down, the bride informed him that everyone was cheering and singing "For he's a jolly good fellow" and a broad smile came over his face.

They departed on their honeymoon to commence a life strangely different from that of other couples, a life full of hope and ambitions. Victory was made possible by the pride, devotion and gratitude they shared with each other.

By our daily contact it soon became apparent that although Norman Wilkinson had no previous training or practical experience—for, bear in mind, he was only a youngster when he joined the Army—he appeared to have ability of a practical kind well above the average. The problem was, in what subject could he be trained and in what way could that training be effected. We were not long in finding out. It happened that a member of the Ladies' Transport Auxiliary was driving him one day when he surprised her by suggesting that a fault was developing in the engine, yet the driver had noticed nothing wrong. Out of curiosity, however, she took the car into a garage and had it examined and found that he was correct. Now, how did he know? He could not see, he could not hear and only the vibrations of the engine could have given him any indication. Surely this man was provided by Providence with an exceptional mental ability which, aided by concentration of thought, could be developed along practical lines. It was this little incident that paved the way for his future training.

We took him along to a pottery works and although at first it was very strange to him it soon became obvious that he was interested and was anxious to learn the technical side as well as the practical side. His wife had a knowledge of the subject and her assistance would be of considerable help in his studies. So a course in pottery was arranged for him at the Sydney Technical College which his wife attended with him to translate on his hands what the teacher had to convey and to enable him to study the text book. He progressed very rapidly and decided that he must have the text book written in Braille so that he could refer to it in future when the occasion arose.

He was then provided with a Stainsby-Wayne Braille-writing machine. It is like a small typewriter with six keys which impress dots and he set to work to study its use because the dots have to be made in reverse. This done, he then set himself the laborious task of translating the entire text book into Braille.

But all this time they had no home of their own and were living in one room in a small hotel and had to get their meals elsewhere. We advertised for apartments for them, we searched the real estate offices, all to no avail. Accommodation for them seemed impossible. Yet a home they must have. Finally we asked a wireless station to appeal over the air for a small cottage which could be rented. The answer was a complete surprise. It was suggested that if we spoke over the air, listeners might be just as willing to pay for a house as to offer a rented house. We did so, and during two short sessions the response was amazing, and the sum of £1,570 10s. 7d. poured in, the amounts ranging from a shilling to £100. Then we made an appeal for a house which we could buy with the money and this was at last located, a satisfactory deal made, renovations completed and the house handed over to the couple, completely furnished. The Repatriation Commission contributed towards the furnishing and also made provision for the garage to be enlarged for use as a workshop, and provided the necessary plant which Norman Wilkinson installed on completion of his technical training.

That is how Norman Wilkinson won victory over total blindness and deafness, and is today a prosperous pottery maker, designing and producing articles of fancy pottery in artistic colours and original designs, which are in great demand in most of the leading departmental stores in Sydney.

Several years have passed and out of his earnings he has purchased a car which his wife drives for him and which he proudly loads with his wares for delivery to his customers.

They have a little boy aged three and this little fellow seems to know that his father can neither hear nor see him. Noticing his mother touching his father's hands he began to do this, of course, at first without any meaning ; but now at the age of three he can make his father understand.

Says Pat, " Go and tell dad that breakfast is ready," and the little boy toddles along to the bedroom and taking hold of his father's hand gives the sign of the letter "B." " All right," says Norman, " tell mother I'm coming " and the little child runs back and delivers the message.

On one occasion we obtained some new samples of clay and suggested to Norman that he should test them to see if they were more suitable than the clay he was using.

A few weeks later, a report was received. He referred to the results obtained by using it by itself, then by adding other materials, and reported on the satisfactory nature or otherwise of the finished glazed article. Discussing the glazing generally, he said that when the sample work was glazed with colours such as green, blue, white and cream, the large quantities of foreign matter and impurities had a great tendency to give the glaze and colours a dead effect, and, in most cases, to change the colour to an altogether different shade. For example, should a white glaze be applied to the ware, it would come out a type of cream, without any life in it. Should a cream glaze be applied, the colour produced would be a brownish yellow instead of the intended colour, and that was mainly due to the iron and other metallic impurities in the clay. This is ample evidence that he is knowledgeable as to the requirements of clay for pottery.

How humble we all must feel when we think of this young man who now proudly takes his place in the world of industry.

Norman, you have set an example and will be an inspiration to all those who may read and hear of your achievements.

JOHN SEUFERT

CHAPTER 19

This is the story of John Seufert and we tell it because there are today many ex-servicemen who, like him, are fighting the battle of re-establishment. We tell it in the hope that his example may inspire others.

There are heroes in peace as well as in war and now that the fighting is over there are thousands of men throughout the Commonwealth with permanent disabilities, fighting their individual battles and they will do so for the remainder of their lives, only too often unnoticed and unsung.

John Seufert was a Sergeant in the 2/1st Pioneer Battalion and, after serving on the battle-fields of the Middle East, returned to Australia and was appointed as an instructor in explosives. While lecturing to a class he was handed a bomb and noticed that the detonator had not been removed and that it was about to explode. Like a flash he threw himself on the bomb and took the full force of the explosion which might otherwise have killed many of those in front of him. For this brave deed he was awarded the Military Medal, but what was the cost? Weeks later he awakened to find himself in a bed at 113 (Concord) Military Hospital practically blind, with only a flicker of sight in one eye, both hands amputated, one ear-drum broken and bits and pieces removed from his face and body ; but John was not beaten ; he was not the type to " drop his bundle " easily, he was alive and determined to stand up and face his problems. But what could he do?

Well, he was determined to do something, but where would he begin? A pair of fitments for his forearms was made for him at the Repatriation Artificial Limb Factory and, as he was bent on learning typewriting, into one of these was screwed a gadget resembling a finger with a rubber pad at the end. He learned to type and he proudly writes letters to his friends—bright breezy letters, letters of a man who is fighting a winning battle.

He could write, but how would he be able to read? Then, while our honorary instructor was teaching one of the men Braille, John picked up a Braille card and running the stump of his arm over it he said he thought he noticed a part which was sensitive to touch. Was it possible that he could learn to read Braille by the aid of the nerve on that stump of the arm? It is difficult enough for those who have sensitive fingers to read the



John starts his day's work with all his tools arranged ready for use.

...ow some hammering is
necessary and John fixes the
hammer in his right gauntlet
d with tweezers in his left
gauntlet selects a nail.



His daily work done, John
does a bit of gardening.

little embossed dots which are known as Braille. Well, he would try, so day by day he and the instructor sat together. One can imagine the patience of the teacher and the earnest labour of the pupil, but John Seufert succeeded and he could then read and became interested in Braille books. This is probably the most remarkable achievement of any Braille instructor or pupil in Australia and perhaps in the world, for we have never seen it recorded that any man without hands has succeeded in reading Braille books. We may be wrong, for blind people with additional disabilities have accomplished so many marvellous things, yet so little has been heard of them or the initiative of their teachers. When we claim that the reading of Braille with the stump of an arm is a unique achievement, we do so in the hope that it will bring under public notice similar accomplishments.

However, this was only the beginning ; John could now read and write ; what else would he be able to do ?

A home was purchased, furnished and presented to John, a bungalow with a nice garden adjacent to parklands. We mention this because blind people quickly become conscious of their surroundings and the colour scheme of a home and an attractive garden have the same elevating effect on the mind as with sighted people.

With the home a new problem arose. How could he open the doors inside his home so as to be able to move about freely ? "That is easy," said John, "I won't have handles, I'll have levers," and John had levers put on all the doors. Then a knife and fork were fitted into his forearm fitments so that he could cut up his food ; his shaving brush was fitted to one fitment and a safety razor to the other. Every day John was inventing other ways and means of becoming completely independent. What a thrill he got out of every little thing he invented and accomplished ! Yes, a blind person or one suffering other disabilities, can get great satisfaction out of the little things which he can accomplish by himself. Such things can surely be called mental achievements, because although seemingly trivial they mean so much to the individual, so much to be thankful for.

Before the war John was a carpenter and joiner and a very skilled man at that. He was the proud possessor of a chest of tools which he valued at £300. If only he could use those tools what a world would be open to him—he had the knowledge, he had the skill, but he was blind and had no hands, yet somehow it must be done. He was sitting one day thinking wistfully of the contents of that chest and with him was a friend who was an engineer and maker of precision tools. Together they



At the end of a day's work there are invoices to be typed and letters to be written by John.

Forks and knives present no difficulties.



A black and white photograph showing four men sitting around a dark wooden table, engaged in a card game. The man on the far left is seen from the back, wearing a light-colored shirt. The man next to him is also in a light shirt, looking towards the center. The man in the center, John, is wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt and is looking down at a card in his hand. The man on the far right is wearing a light-colored shirt and is also looking at a card. The table is covered with playing cards. In the background, there is a large framed picture on the wall and a vase with flowers on a surface.

In the evening John enjoys a game of cards with his friends, reading the Braille markings on the corner of each card by a nerve at the end of the stump of his arm.

A black and white photograph showing John sitting in a large armchair, reading from a book. He is wearing a light-colored short-sleeved shirt. A young girl is sitting on his lap, holding a doll. To the right of John, a young boy is sitting at a small white table, playing with some toys. The table has several dark-colored cups and a small container on it. The background shows a wooden chair and a small cabinet.

Sometimes in the evening John will read short stories to his little daughter from a Braille book with the stump of his arm.

devised plans to make gadgets by which saws, planes, hammers, chisels, in fact, the whole range of tools could be quickly and firmly fitted into the fitment of the right arm, whilst on the left fitment could be fitted tweezers to pick up nails.

The seemingly impossible was achieved and John was back in his old trade again—a carpenter and joiner, blind and with no hands, but ready to do any job. His tools were arranged near his working bench in an orderly and systematic way so that he knew exactly where to pick up any tool he wanted and he quickly developed a rapidity of movement which was nothing short of astounding. If he wanted to saw he would get the first thread of the screw into his fitment and with a rapid succession of twists have it ready for use. None of the skill which he had previously acquired was lost. He seemed to get through his work with as much ease and rapidity as though he had his hands. But a sense of touch was necessary to examine the work he was doing and here the stumps of his arms came into play.

One of the first things John did was to glass in his verandah. He did not do it all himself—another blinded soldier came along to help him. He knew nothing about carpentry and John acted as foreman and the other man did the labouring work and helped with the lifting, and together they did the job. We took him a hand loom and asked him if he could make them for the Australian Red Cross Society and compete with other firms for the contract. Running the stumps of his arms over the loom he said he could and soon he was making all the two-way and four-way hand looms for the New South Wales Division of the Society.

Next he made fly screens for doors and windows, card tables and glory boxes. He obtained contracts for shop fittings and wall panelling and soon had to employ an assistant to help him carry out the ever-increasing volume of work which poured in to him. Blind, handless, but undeterred, he just carries on his normal way of life, happy and contented, skilful, ambitious and successful.

John, your victory is won and we are telling this story because we feel that what you have done against such terrible odds will be an incentive to others to emulate your example, and so you will help others to win their battles. We know you would ask for no greater reward than the knowledge that what you have accomplished will bring hope and encouragement to those who are fighting the battle of life.

That is the simple story of a great Australian—ex-Sergeant John Seufert, M.M. Anything can be accomplished with determination and assistance by a capable and patient instructor, so why should we worry about our disabilities and dwell upon our handicaps when we have such an example before us?

VENETIAN BLINDS

CHAPTER 20

Where the loss of sight is accompanied by other ailments as happened to some men who had spent three or four years in the hands of the Japanese, the training for permanent employment appeared to be inadvisable until such time as the man had fully regained his health. The immediate need was to get the men placed in comfortable homes in the outer suburbs where they could enjoy open air recreation by cultivating their gardens and engaging in light home occupations whenever they felt inclined. These occupations consisted of weaving, restringing of tennis racquets, the making of string bags and so forth. These home occupations are generally regarded as a temporary expedient during which the men's capabilities for more permanent occupations can be ascertained.

In this category were Harry Hooper who served in the 2/18th Battalion and John Williams who served in Eighth Division Headquarters Staff, both having been released from Japanese prison camps with almost entire loss of sight and other ailments requiring medical treatment.

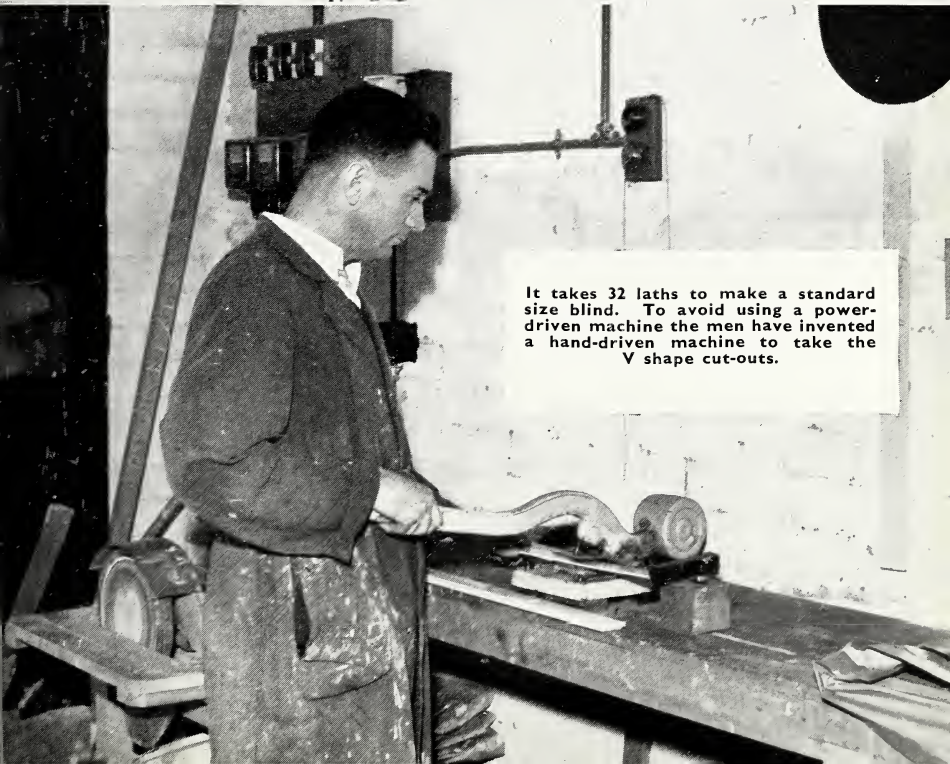
Comfortable homes, healthy surroundings, gardening opportunities and light occupation in home workshops rapidly restored their health, and the experience and confidence which they had gained made them eager and ambitious to start in some business of their own, giving them a greater feeling of independence and a more definite objective. By this time the Committee knew them so well that it was felt that every opportunity should be placed in their way.

The honorary Rehabilitation Officer conceived the idea that venetian blinds, which were in great demand, might not be beyond the capabilities of sightless men, who were adaptable, energetic and ambitious. The problem was how to get them trained when the Committee had no workshops of its own and no instructors skilled in that class of work.

In large industrial centres there are to be found patriotic and public-spirited business men quite willing to make their premises with all facilities and skilled knowledge available when the need is placed before them. Thus it was that an enterprising firm willingly took these two men in and with their own materials, plant and highly skilled workmen and under the personal supervision of the General Manager, gave them a thorough training in the art of making venetian blinds.



The timbers have to be cut by hand in lengths necessary for the size of the blind required. The Pulley Head is made and as this is the backbone of the blind, every care must be taken that the mortice holes are accurate, for the free running of the blind depends on this.



It takes 32 laths to make a standard size blind. To avoid using a power-driven machine the men have invented a hand-driven machine to take the V shape cut-outs.

When it is remembered that, after training, these men were to set up in business on their own account and in competition with the firm which was training them, the generosity of this large industrial organisation is beyond praise. In this particular case not only did the firm carry out the training at some expense to themselves, but afterwards actually helped the men to secure business from one of their own customers.

The training completed, the next move was to find a suitable workshop and instal the necessary plant, the latter being supplied by the Repatriation Commission.

As Harry Hooper and John Williams were great chums and lived next door to each other, they naturally thought they would like to work as partners and form a private company. What name would they give to the company? They thought it over and one said to the other, "We have been told that we must win victory over our blindness and as we are going to make blinds why not call ourselves the Victory Blind Company?" And so the Victory Blind Company they became.

Orders soon began to come in. Customers were pleased with their venetian blinds, which were claimed to be equal to anything which could be done by sighted men.

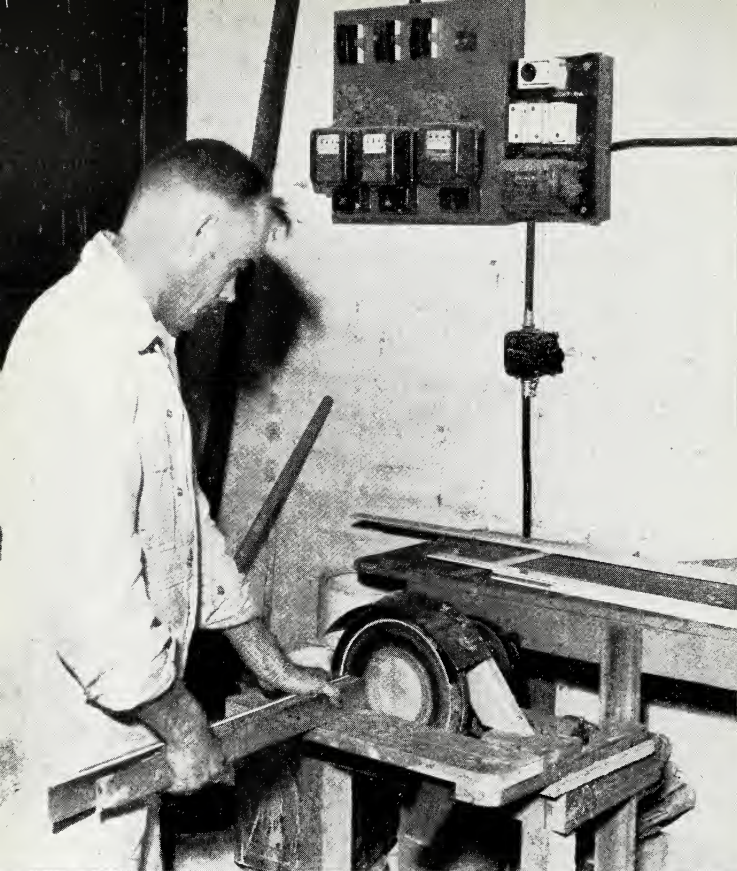
They soon decided that they must have another man to help them, not a sighted man, oh no! They would train one of the other blinded soldiers—the blind teaching the blind, and why not? And so Eric Kleem of the 17th A.A.O.D. who had also been a prisoner of war, was trained and admitted into partnership. Latterly yet a fourth blinded man has been trained and taken into partnership. He is Frank Tarrant of the 105 Motor Transport. These four men are now fully established as makers of venetian blinds and carrying on a profitable business.

Many thousands of people visit the Blue Mountains each year to view the wonderful sights which nature provides. Their cars daily speed along the Great Western Highway, passing by a little workshop which was once the store room of a produce merchant. Yet, in this little workshop on the main highway there is now a spectacle of a different character, one as interesting and surprising as any of the sights which hold the attention of visitors when they arrive on the Blue Mountains.

In that little workshop are Harry Hooper, John Williams, Eric Kleem and Frank Tarrant, unaided by any sighted person, industriously engaged in the making of venetian blinds. These four men can be seen calmly going about their work, bundles of uncut slats and rolls of tape being rapidly turned into venetian blinds and made ready for despatch; yet they seem to think there is nothing unusual about it—it is their business and they are a company—yes, the Victory Blind Company.

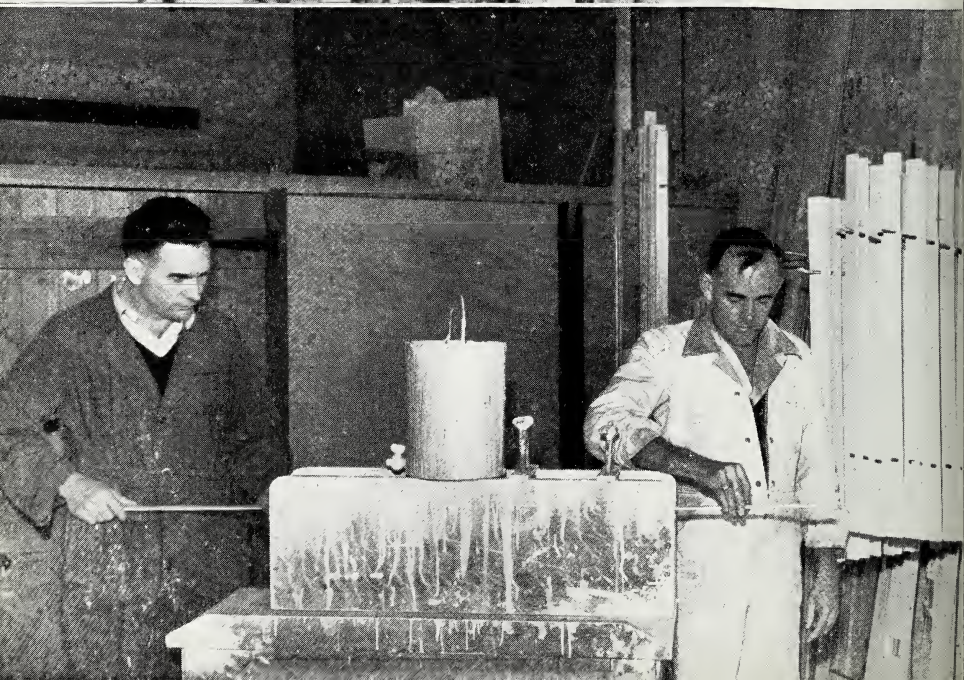


Three of the four partners in the Victory Blind Company. L. to R.—Harry Hooper, Eric Kleem, John Williams. The fourth, Frank Tarrant was unfortunately in R.G.H. Concord when this book went to print.



After cutting, the timber passes through a sanding machine. This is the only power driven machine operated.

The laths are painted by means of a machine consisting of a series of rollers and two brushes. The laths are fed into the roller end by hand, passing through the brushes to finish.



SWITCHBOARDS AND KIOSKS

CHAPTER 21

In all large business organisations and Government Departments there is scope for the employment of telephone switchboard operators. After a period of training, this work can be carried out very efficiently by men without sight. Several of the men elected to commence such training and the Deputy-Controller of Posts and Telegraphs in Sydney readily agreed to place the facilities of his Department at the service of the men for the purpose of training them under a skilled instructress. The training was so effectively carried out that no difficulty was experienced in placing them in permanent positions where they have given every satisfaction. A little guiding sight is naturally a great advantage, but not essential. One of these trainees is specially worthy of mention, because he is wholly blind and yet reached such a high standard of proficiency that he is reported to be giving complete satisfaction to his employers. He is L.A.C. Lloyd Kowald who joined the R.A.A.F. as a telegraphist. His sight was lost by an explosion on a landing barge during operations at Madang. There are three members of the Royal Australian Air Force residing in New South Wales who suffered loss of sight in the 1939 war. On his return to Australia, Lloyd rapidly acquired a knowledge of typewriting and Braille, and, as a hobby to fill in his spare time, he does some weaving.

Laurie Dwyer joined and served with distinction with the Eighth Division. While in the hands of the Japanese his sight gradually failed through the slow torture of malnutrition. On his return he had an ambition to open a florist's shop and his wife was keen to help him. They both underwent a course of training and a kiosk was erected in one of Sydney's underground railway stations. The venture was successful from the commencement.

The working hours each day were very long as it was necessary for them to go to the market in the early hours of the morning in order to have their floral displays ready by the time crowds began to arrive at the station, and to remain open until the evening to sell to the crowds leaving for home. It was soon found, however, that there were two or three very slack days each week, and on those days they rested. The busy days were quite sufficient to make the kiosk profitable without overtaxing their strength.

A second kiosk was made available by the N.S.W. Railways Commissioner and this provided an opportunity for a dry-cleaning depot.

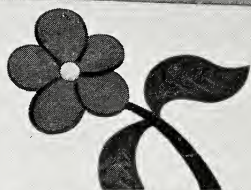
Town Hall

VALET SERVICE

EXCLUSIVE CLEANING & DYEING..



Claude Jones at his dry-cleaning depot in the Town Hall Station Kiosk, Sydney.



florist



Laurie Dwyer ready to serve customers at his Florist's Kiosk in the Town Hall Station, Sydney.

Claude Jones of the 2/3rd M.T. had also been a prisoner in the hands of the Japanese and went through the cruel experience of forced work on the building of the Burma-Siam Railway. He returned to Sydney suffering from retrobulbar neuritis, gunshot wounds and traumatic fibrositis in the abdomen.

Prior to joining he was a leading boilermaker employed by the N.S.W. Railways and, after a period of rest, made a gallant effort to resume work with his previous employer and was appointed Assistant Foreman in the N.S.W. Railways workshops with an assistant to help him, a very generous gesture on the part of the Railways Commissioner.

Claude Jones was a most conscientious man and, after giving it a fair trial, he came to the conclusion that he was not pulling his weight. Not wishing to impose upon his employer's generosity he decided to relinquish the appointment.

A dry-cleaning depot in a railway station kiosk was suggested to him and he jumped at the idea, for he felt that it was a job which he could do without too great an effort with the assistance of his wife, and at the same time be the proprietor of his own business.

A little preliminary training was all that was necessary to become familiar with the routine of receiving, boxing and despatch to the dry cleaning factory and the re-delivery to the client a few days later. In addition, a few days were spent in the dry cleaning Factory to grasp the routine of receiving and delivery.

Claude Jones then opened his depot and began to work up a profitable undertaking with the added incentive of being his own master.

Switchboard operating.



HIDDEN TALENTS

CHAPTER 22

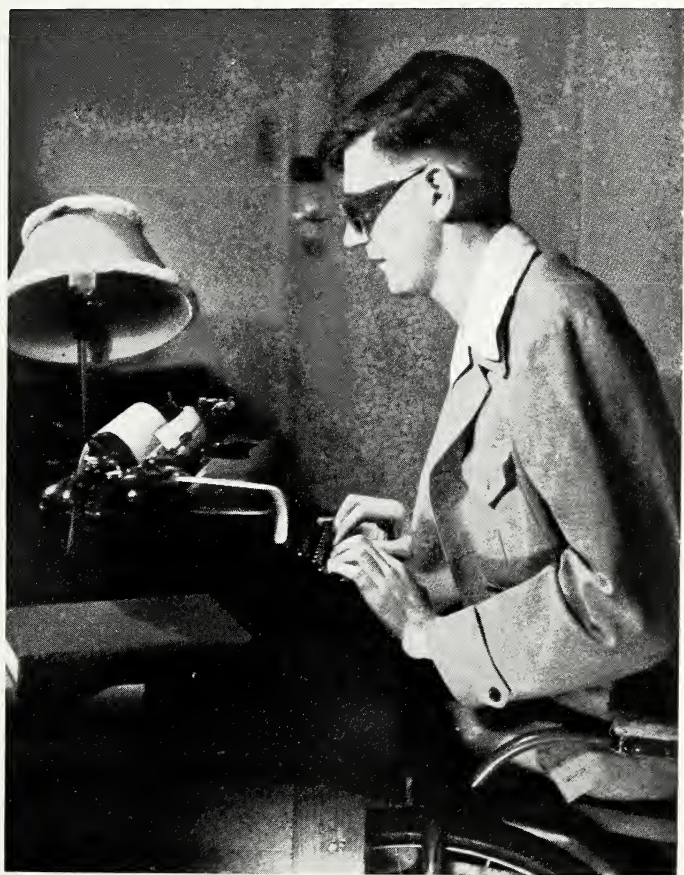
There are men who in addition to loss of sight, suffer other disabilities which restrict their activities in physical occupations. These are problem cases which require very careful study. The solution cannot be found by questionnaires, but winning a man's confidence by taking a personal interest in him may bring to light some hidden talent which can be developed. An example of this can be found in the case of Kevin O'Connor. Before the war he was a clerk and when war was declared he enlisted in the R.A.A.F. at the age of eighteen and rose to the rank of Sergeant. He is now only twenty-seven years of age.

While stationed at Morotai he contracted disseminated sclerosis which caused loss of sight and rendered his legs so useless that he needs a wheel-chair. Kevin made up his mind that he was going to get all he could out of life and to occupy his time as fully as possible. He set to work practising type-writing and became interested in occupational therapy, but could not continue the latter as he had not the full use of his hands. He became an excellent typist, but even that became more difficult as time went on. When it became more difficult for him to use his limbs it was necessary to solve the problem as to how he could fill in his time. An opportunity presented itself in an unexpected way. It had been noticed that the letters which he typed were very descriptive and well put together, so it was suggested to him that he might put his thoughts on paper. The field of journalism was new to him but it was something which he thought he could do. He spends many hours thinking out an article of his own choice to interest the readers of *Chins Up*. Sometimes he will sit at his typewriter and with one finger place his thoughts on paper, even though he can do so only with difficulty owing to the condition of his hands. Latterly he has been obliged to commit his thoughts to memory and dictate for others to type.

His first article appeared in the November, 1948, issue of *Chins Up* and the subject was "Musical Contemporaries." He is a lover of music, he knew his subject and it attracted so much favourable comment that it took very little persuasion to induce him to continue writing. He is now regarded as one of the foremost contributors to that journal. Here was something which Kevin had discovered he could do.

The other subjects about which he has written have been "Listening Post to Music," "My Impressions of Anzac Day," "Sequel to Soliloquy," "My Philosophy of Life," "Is Idleness a Curse," "The Feminine Touch," a poem "The Forlorn Wanderer," "Brown Study," "My Day at the R.G.H., Concord" and "Beauty." These subjects require deep thought and have a high journalistic quality.

In a case such as this it is well worth while searching for any hidden talent which a man might possess but which he is not aware of. He may not be able to turn it to profitable account, but for a man who is a permanent invalid it may solve the problem of mental occupation.



Kevin O'Connor sitting in the wheelchair in front of his typewriter.

JOHN EASTMAN

CHAPTER 23

John Eastman served for 37 years in the Royal Navy. In the first World War he served in submarines and at the outbreak of the second World War he was Instructor with the rank of Lieutenant in the Hong Kong R.N.V.R. and became a prisoner in the hands of the Japanese. He returned with the loss of his sight and a leg injury and decided to remain in Sydney. Owing to the difficulty of movement due to the injury to his leg, as well as his loss of sight and having arrived at the age of retirement, he decided to take up rug making and typewriting as hobbies to fill in his time. He became so expert at rug making that in 1949 he was awarded 2nd prize at the Royal Sydney Agricultural Show against all comers. The rug was afterwards sent to England and entered for the "Daily Express" rug making competition and was included in the final 25 of 3,000 competitors. For the Royal Sydney Agricultural Show in 1950 he prepared another rug, 2 yards long and 1 yard wide. It weighed 14 lb. and contained 29,000 stitches. The pattern consisted of sprays of leaves in turquoise and dark blue on an off-white background with dots of shell pink running through the centre. This rug was awarded 1st prize against all comers and it was not disclosed to the judges beforehand that he was the only blind competitor.



John Eastman showing how he actually makes a rug. The dark object on the left is a piece of zinc on which the rug pattern is picked out in Braille.



John Eastman with his prize-winning rug.

CHINS UP

CHAPTER 24

When most of the men had been settled in useful employment the question arose as to what steps could be taken to hold them together as a community, for they were scattered far and wide throughout the State of N.S.W., following their various occupations.

It was impossible to keep in personal touch with them all; neither did we want to give them the impression that we wished to encroach upon their independence.

The community spirit was strong and there was much to be said for the inspiration which they could gain by close contact with each other and the knowledge of each other's activities. Many people who had actively assisted the men did not want to lose touch with them. This problem was solved by the publication of a monthly journal which is issued to the men and their wide circle of friends. It was called *Chins Up* and the first issue appeared in September, 1947, and it has continued ever since. The name seemed appropriate as it was inspired by the men's courage.

Apart from being a journal of information, its purpose was to provide a guiding influence for the men, to record the progress which they were making and their personal experiences which would be of interest and benefit to one another. Personal notes, Club notes, social and sporting activities and letters to the Editor were to be features of the journal. It was also felt that such a publication would provide an opportunity to develop journalistic and descriptive talents which might otherwise have remained dormant. It would give the men an opportunity of expressing their ideas on various subjects which might prove helpful to others. *Chins Up* provided a field for expression which would enable the men to spend many happy hours at home with their typewriters and the feeling that they were doing something creative and useful in their spare time. The result was very pleasing and soon quite a number of the men became regular contributors, most of the articles being written by the men themselves. One who regularly wrote for every issue under the pen name of "Tiger" covered the cricket activities and results in a novel and breezy manner, while others contributed notes on gardening, book reviews, travel and humorous incidents.

When "Tiger" relinquished that work, others were found ready and able to continue it. After the formation of the Bowling Club, regular notes were contributed by one of the blinded bowlers.

The men had all been trained in typewriting and were provided with typewriters and it gave them ample opportunity to keep up their practice.

Chins Up is unique in that it is the only monthly journal in Australia which is published for circulation amongst blinded ex-servicemen and their friends.

Chins Up has repeatedly emphasised that one of the advantages of mental and physical occupation is the effect which it has in enabling one to visualise surrounding objects, thus creating a mental picture which seems to transcend the darkness and satisfy the imagination. Articles which have been published from time to time in *Chins Up* and written by the men describing what they have seen and done during their holiday travels are a clear indication that they have put this advice to practical use and it is regarded as an important element in their training.

The Clubroom.



THE REST OF THE STORY

CHAPTER 25

It will have been recognised that the blinded soldier can be materially helped by training designed to meet his needs, gadgets to assist him in his tasks and facilities for the happy employment of his leisure hours. The instances which we have told to you were chosen, not because they were intrinsically better nor the efforts of the men necessarily superior to those of other blinded soldiers. Indeed we are unhappy that there cannot be a full coverage of all the men and their undertakings. Their achievements, as well as their hopes and fears, are human stories.

No avenue has been left unexplored which might lead a blinded ex-serviceman towards a fuller life.

In addition to those aids, mechanical and otherwise, that have been already mentioned, there are other devices which can be of service in special avenues.

Should a blinded soldier be employed in photographic development, a specially made "timer" is available. To ascertain the heat of liquids, a thermometer has been devised which can be read with the fingers instead of the eyes. Incidentally, it might be said that working in a photographic dark room presents no real problems to a blinded soldier.

A dictating machine can be of great value not only as an aid to a business executive, but also for the preparation of recordings on cylinders, discs or wire. By these recordings, a blinded student may, without assistance, listen to a chapter of a text-book over and over again until he has mastered its contents.

Readers for blinded students can be of the utmost value where the tedious task of rendering into Braille a book which may not be referred to again once it has been studied, is not regarded as justified. The Repatriation Commission has had reference books transcribed, but the value of recordings for study purposes cannot be too strongly stressed.

Talking-book machines are specially made gramophones with motors which permit the turntable to revolve at slow speeds. About twenty-four revolutions per minute are suitable for English records and a few more for those from America. A record may run for about twenty-five minutes and may be heard either through a loud speaker or through headphones. Talking-book machines were not being made in England during the war period but as soon as they became available the Commission imported one hundred and twenty of the electric type and ten

of the clockwork models. Libraries of talking-book records (which are double-sided) are prepared to supply records of the reader's selection wherever he may live. These talking-book machines are especially useful to those men who are fond of reading and who are anxious to keep abreast of the world's literature but who have not been able to acquire sufficient skill in Braille reading or who desire a rest from it. They enable the men to be completely independent of a sighted reader.

Braille writing machines are not in great demand by blinded members but where they are needed in a vocation one is supplied.

A few pieces of light elastic in a frame will assist men to write in script in straight lines.

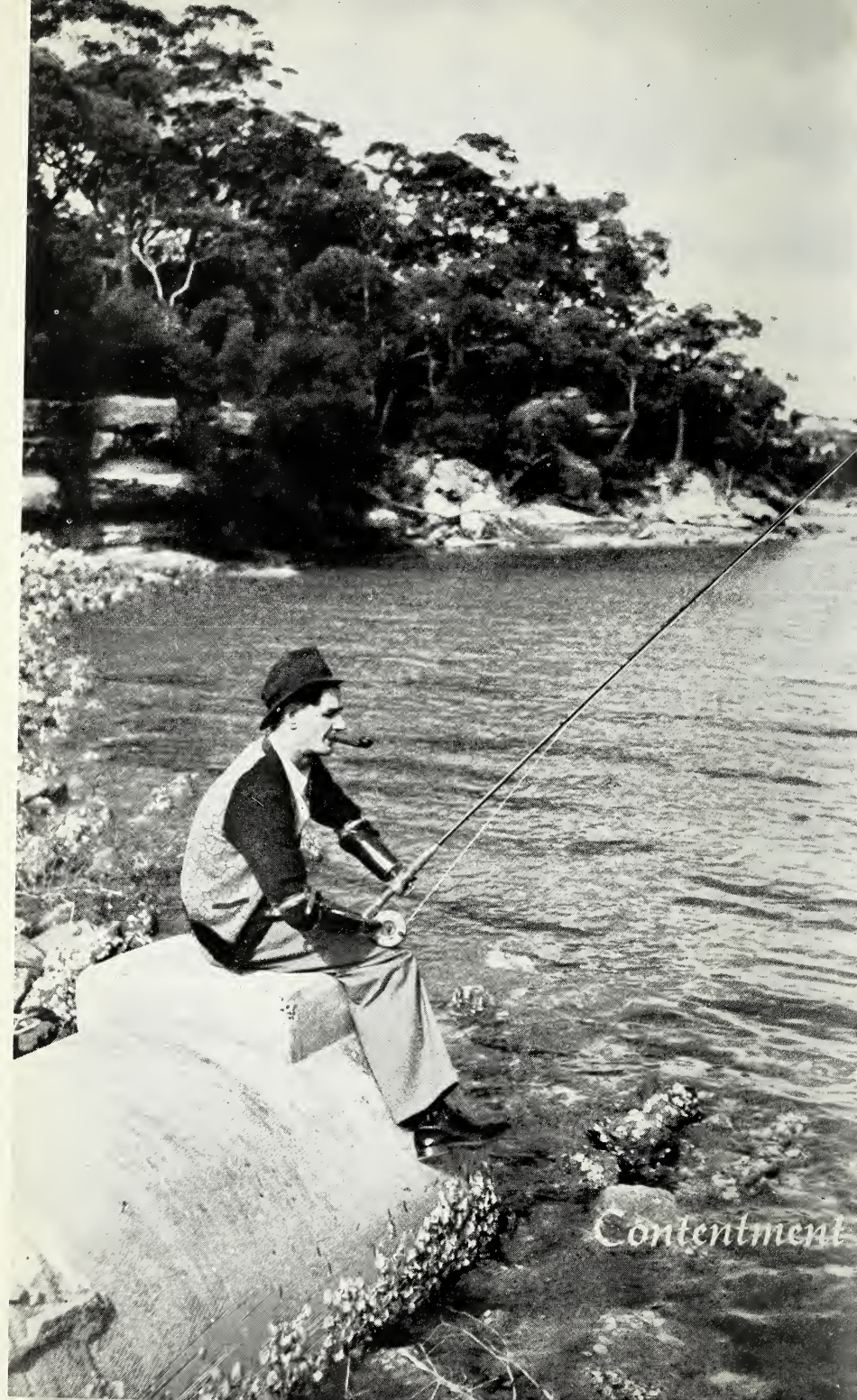
Because of an injury to the eyes, a surgeon may have to remove them, and, to restore the face to normal appearance, artificial eyes have been supplied. In recent years these eyes have been made from plastic materials as well as glass. Not only is it necessary to ensure that each eye is a good fit but it should match the other and suit the complexion of the wearer ; all this can be done by a skilled eye-maker and in some men it is difficult to discern that their eyes are not those they were born with.

If a blinded soldier desires to be a carpenter, it is useless to give him a spirit level in which he has to see a bubble. The obvious thing to do is to make a level for him so that he can feel whether a pointer is opposite an indicator. His rule can have metal strips or tacks in it so that he can feel measurements.

The aids mentioned are but contributing factors to industrial and recreative well-being and, with a little ingenuity, something can usually be devised to meet a particular situation.

We feel that it has been amply shown that initiative and enterprise have been displayed by men in an endeavour to find a way of life which is satisfying to them. However it must be emphasised that, without the blinded soldier's steadfast will to attain victory, no aids, no training, no facilities are of much avail.

† It has been our pleasure to help those men to overcome obstacles, to lead a full life, to take their place in the community and to live just as other men do. They are blinded but unbeaten.



Contentment

HV1794 Nobbs, H. Gilbert.

N Blinded but unbeaten: A
record of incidents
connected with the
welfare, training and

DATE DUE			

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NEW YORK, N. Y. 10011

